

**Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program**  
**15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference**  
**Cha-Am, Petchburi Province, Thailand**  
**17 – 19 June 2009**

**I. Introduction**

1. The 15<sup>th</sup> Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Ministerial Conference (the Conference) was held on 17 – 19 June 2009 in Cha-Am, Petchburi Province, Thailand. The Conference consisted of three related events: a Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held on 17 June 2009, a Development Partners' Meeting (DPM) on 18 June 2009, and the formal Ministerial Meeting (MM) in the morning of 19 June 2009, followed by a Ministerial Retreat in the afternoon. Reference materials can be accessed through <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Events/2009/15th-GMS-Ministerial-Conference/default.asp> at the ADB website.

2. The objectives of the Conference were to: (i) take stock of progress made in implementing the Vientiane Plan of Action adopted and endorsed by the Third GMS Summit of Leaders in March 2008; (ii) discuss and review strategies and action plans for the energy and human resource development (HRD) sectors, as well as the North-South and East-West Economic Corridors; (iii) hold a dialogue with development partners (DPs) and identify areas of collaboration; and (iv) agree on the priorities for the next few years. A total of about 180 participants were in attendance during the three-day Conference from the GMS countries, development partner institutions, and ADB.

3. The MM was chaired by His Excellency (H.E.) Dr. Virachai Virameteekul, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, and co-chaired by Mr. C. Lawrence Greenwood, Jr., ADB Vice President (Operations 2). The GMS Ministers who participated in the event were H.E. Cham Prasidh, Senior Minister, Ministry of Commerce and GMS Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia; H.E. Madame Khempheng Pholsena, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office and Minister for Economic Cooperation in the GMS, Water Resources and Environment Administration, Prime Minister's Office of Lao PDR; H.E. Colonel Thauyain Zaw, Minister, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development of the Union of Myanmar; and H.E. Nguyen Duc Hoa, Vice Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Mr. Wu Jingkang, Deputy Director General, International Department, Ministry of Finance, People's Republic of China (PRC) represented H.E. Li Yong, Vice Minister, Ministry of Finance and GMS Minister of PRC, who earlier confirmed his participation but was unable to attend due to another important engagement.

4. The Government of Thailand hosted the Conference. The ADB, through TA 6262-REG: *Enhancing the Development Effectiveness of the GMS Program*, provided financial, technical and secretariat support for the Conference.

**II. Highlights of the Conference**

5. The Chair of the MM, Thai GMS Minister Virachai Veerameteekul, urged strengthened cooperation in the agriculture and energy sectors, which would help (i) effectively address the major global and subregional concerns of food and energy security; (ii) develop adequate and effective a logistical network system, which would significantly reduce the costs of doing-business in our subregion; and (iii) enhance participation of local people and fostering the sense of people-to-people contact. In his opening statement, Vice President Greenwood noted that the

conference was taking place in a time of crisis, as well as of opportunity. Apart from the national measures that the GMS countries were taking in response to the present crisis, such as easing of macroeconomic policy and setting up social safety nets, regional responses would also be vital, in the form of accelerated regional integration, which would help compensate for the fall in demand from the West, and, in the medium-term, help them restructure their economies to better rebalance growth away from excessive dependence on exports. He stressed that the GMS Program's core mandate of regional integration and building competitiveness had never been more relevant than it was now.

6. In their respective opening statements, the other GMS Ministers underscored the importance as well as the achievements of GMS cooperation. They expressed their countries' continued commitment to the GMS Program. They noted that now that the GMS Program was 17 years old, it may be the right time to reflect on what the Program should do next. The GMS had matured and had different needs that were not entirely foreseen at its inception. The current global financial crisis had also added new challenges that required greater efforts to accelerate integration. They stressed the importance of revisiting the pipeline of GMS projects to see whether they needed to be reprioritized and aligned with the changed circumstances. Concerted and accelerated action and stronger political push toward more effective institutional reforms were needed to secure funding for GMS projects, as well as to develop new policies that responded well to these emerging challenges. The GMS Ministers endorsed the reports of the SOM and DPM, which are attached in **Appendix 1 and 2**, respectively.

7. The GMS Ministers noted the following positive developments and initiatives, providing further impetus to the GMS Program and opportunities for more collaborative undertakings among member countries, and with ADB and other DPs:

- (i) **remarkable progress in implementing the Vientiane Plan of Action, 2008-2012**, which was adopted by the GMS Leaders during the Third Summit in March 2008;
- (ii) **report of the GMS Economic Corridors Forum (ECF) Task Force** highlighting the establishment of ECF in June 2008, and the **High Level Symposium on GMS Logistics Cooperation** and associated events held in Kunming in June 2009;
- (iii) **progress in implementing the cross-border transport agreement (CBTA) and the initial findings of the CBTA strategic review**. The review provided a diagnostic assessment of impediments to effective CBTA implementation, and would serve as the basis for finalizing a comprehensive strategy and work program for GMS transport and trade facilitation;
- (iv) **report on the GMS Business Forum**, which presented updates on initiatives promoting GMS-private sector partnership in transport and trade facilitation, and the creation of an SME Development Fund; and
- (v) **report of the DPM, which highlighted** DPs continued interest and commitment to the GMS Program, and underscored the need for stronger collaboration and enhanced coordination, given the complexity of some programs, such as those on climate change and transport and trade facilitation.

8. The GMS Ministers endorsed the following strategies and action plans that will guide GMS cooperation in the next several years, and facilitate a more results-focused implementation of key endeavors:

- (i) the new **GMS HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan for 2009-2012**, which would bring into sharper focus the strategic directions and programs in health, education, labor and migration, and other social development areas, and will outline measures to strengthen the institutional arrangements for HRD cooperation;
- (ii) the **Road Map for Expanded GMS Energy Cooperation**, which provided the blueprint for the implementation of the GMS Energy Strategy Study recommendations to expand cooperation beyond the electric power sector, to improve energy security, and promote environmentally-sound energy practices;
- (iii) the **Strategy and Action Plan for the North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC)**, which provided a multisector and holistic approach towards its transformation into a genuine economic corridor;
- (iv) the **updated Strategy and Action Plan for the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC)**, which provided a fresh vision and framework in pursuing further development of this corridor, taking into account lessons learned from the first strategy for 2001-2009; and
- (v) a **proposal for reorientation of the Work Program for GMS Investment Cooperation**, including the reactivation of the subregional investment working group (SIWG), which would refocus its work on results-oriented initiatives that promoted public private partnership and private sector investments along the GMS economic corridors

9. The Ministerial Retreat provided a venue for the GMS Ministers and ADB Vice President (Operations Group 2) to discuss key issues facing the GMS Program, particularly how to accelerate the implementation of the GMS CBTA, and future challenges that would shape the next 10-year strategy (2012-2022) for the GMS Program, such as climate change, rapid urbanization and aging, and economic restructuring in the face of the unwinding of global economic imbalances.

### **III. Conclusion**

10. The Conference provided a timely opportunity for GMS ministers to discuss progress and problems of ongoing activities, and consider new strategic directions in light of concerns and emerging issues in the regional and global environments.

11. The GMS Ministers issued a Joint Ministerial Statement (**Appendix 3**) at the conclusion of the Conference.

**Senior Officials' Meeting  
Chair's Report to the Ministerial Meeting**

**Mr. Arkhom Termpittayapaisith  
Deputy Secretary-General  
National Economic and Social Development Board, Thailand**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored to present a summary of the Senior Officials' Meeting held on 17 June 2009, which I co-chaired with Mr. Tom Crouch, Deputy Director General, Southeast Asia Department of Asian Development Bank.

The Senior Officials affirmed continued commitment to the GMS Program, urged stronger collaborative ties among the six countries in the subregion, and encouraged greater private sector participation. The SOM acknowledged the central role of regional collaboration for effectively responding to the ongoing global financial crisis and economic slowdown, and the challenges of climate change. Overall, the SOM reaffirmed to continue delivering Leaders' directives, especially those given during the Third GMS Summit in 2008.

The SOM carefully reviewed five strategic initiatives, which I have the honor to submit for your Excellencies' endorsement:

- (i) the **GMS Human Resources Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan**, which will guide cooperation and intensify implementation of initiatives in health, education, labor and migration, and social development;
- (ii) the **GMS Road Map for Expanding Cooperation in Energy**, which will expand cooperation beyond the electric power sector, improve energy security, and promote the energy-environment nexus;
- (iii) the **Strategy and Action Plan for the North-South Economic Corridor**, which will provide a multisector and holistic approach in developing this corridor;
- (iv) the **updated Strategy and Action Plan for the East-West Economic Corridor**, which will provide a fresh vision and framework in pursuing further development of this corridor, taking into account lessons learned from the first strategy covering 2001-2009; and
- (v) a proposal for reorientation of **draft work program for GMS Investment Cooperation**, including the reactivation of the subregional investment working group, which will refocus its work on results-oriented initiatives that promote investments along the GMS economic corridors.

Besides these five substantive outputs, the SOM noted other positive developments and initiatives, providing further impetus to the GMS Program and opportunities for more collaborative undertakings among member countries. I am pleased to inform your Excellencies of the following key developments in the GMS Program:

- (i) **remarkable progress in implementing the Vientiane Plan of Action, 2008-2012**, which was adopted by the GMS Leaders during the Third Summit in March 2008 and further updated following its first review at the SOM in November 2008;
- (ii) **report of the GMS Economic Corridors Forum (ECF) Task Force** highlighting the establishment of ECF in June 2008, and the **High Level Symposium on GMS Logistics Cooperation** and associated events held on 6-10 June 2009;

- (iii) **progress in implementing the cross-border transport agreement (CBTA) and the initial findings of the CBTA strategic review.** The review provides a diagnostic assessment of impediments to effective CBTA implementation, and will serve as the basis for finalizing a comprehensive strategy and work program for GMS transport and trade facilitation; and
- (iv) **report on the GMS Business Forum**, which presented updates on initiatives promoting GMS-private sector partnership in transport and trade facilitation, and the creation of an SME Development Fund.

GMS leaders have emphasized the importance of moving from investments in physical connectivity to greater attention to complementary non-physical or "soft" investments. Before we end this session, let me invite you to view two videos illustrating achievements on the soft aspects of regional cooperation. The first video presents the commencement of tripartite exchange of traffic rights involving Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and Viet Nam, and the expansion of bilateral exchange of traffic rights between Cambodia and Viet Nam. The second video shows the commencement of power trade between Cambodia and Viet Nam.

**Development Partners' Meeting  
Co-Chair's Report to the Ministerial Meeting**

**Mr. Arjun Thapan  
Director General, Southeast Asia Department  
Asian Development Bank**

Ministers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

The DPM held yesterday was attended by 32 representatives of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, and other development partner organizations, GMS Senior Officials, and resource persons from ADB.

Allow me to summarize the key points that were discussed.

We agreed that overall, there was considerable progress in each of the 9 sectors and thematic areas in the GMS Program relative to their individual goals and targets.

We noted the translation of the Third Summit directives into concrete action. New strategies and action plans in priority areas have also been formulated, which outline priority programs and emerging opportunities for development partnerships.

We noted, too, the enhanced attention given to the soft aspects of subregional development and the completion of a GMS Human Resource Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan. This will serve as planning tool for development partners' interventions in subregional cooperation in health, education, labor and migration, and social development. We identified opportunities for support and complementarity of technical assistance programs, and sharing of expertise and knowledge products in the mitigation of negative externalities associated with increased regional integration including communicable disease control and prevention of human trafficking, as well as special programs for migrant, ethnic and other vulnerable communities. The importance of investing in human capital was also emphasized, particularly through curriculum and skills development to meet the demands of the expanded labor market, capacity building programs for GMS officials, provision of social safety nets, community empowerment, green jobs, and employment and income generation programs particularly relevant in the context of the current economic crisis.

Partners welcomed the completion of a road map to implement the GMS energy strategy and expand cooperation beyond the electric power sector, to improve energy security, and to promote the energy-environment nexus in the context of the climate change threat. In the background of decline in energy demand subsequent to the crisis, an opportunity exists to further strengthen institutional capacity and focus on pro-poor energy development. Partners are ready to provide support in the form of financial, policy/institutional, capacity building, and knowledge-based tools. Specific areas of interest noted are power transmission, clean energy, energy efficiency/energy conservation, and renewable energy (biofuels, bioenergy). We noted, however, that the question of biofuels and bioenergy development should be carefully judged in light of food and water security tradeoffs.

Partners were pleased with progress in the transport sector including the near completion of GMS corridors, establishment of the GMS Economic Corridors Forum in 2008 and plans for next Forum in September 2009. They recognized that the investment requirement for the East-West and North-South Economic Corridors is a huge challenge in a recessionary

environment. The Partners stressed the need to immediately address the soft bottlenecks to encourage private sector investments so as to effectively transform the physical corridors into economic corridors. In that respect, they welcomed new directions proposed for revitalizing the Working Group for subregional investment cooperation.

Partners expressed considerable interest to help enhance cross-border, intra-regional trade by addressing the remaining issues and impediments to the effective implementation of the GMS Cross Border Transport Agreement and other transport and trade facilitation measures identified in the strategic review. These include policy, procedural, institutional, capacity issues. Additional co-financing for CBTA, physical infrastructure, measures that promote business efficiency and strengthen the business environment, rehabilitation/maintenance of transport infrastructure, and capacity building programs for sanitary and phytosanitary standards for trade facilitation is and will be provided.

Partners are supporting several initiatives in the subregion for climate-resilient and environmentally-sustainable growth. These include: climate change adaptation and mitigation, particularly renewable energy projects and reduced emission from deforestation and land degradation, natural disaster assistance across borders and also multi-sectoral approaches to ensuring food security at the country and regional levels.

In summary, the Development Partners' Meeting demonstrated the substantive and continued engagement of DPs in the GMS Program. It underscored the need for tighter collaboration and enhanced coordination among the countries and with development partners, given the complexity of some programs such as those on climate change and trade facilitation.

We recommend that this report on the Development Partners' Meeting be considered by the Ministers for adoption.

## 15<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference Joint Ministerial Statement

### Preamble

1. We, the Ministers from the Governments of 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, met in Cha-Am, Petchburi Province, Thailand, on 19 June 2009 for the 15<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program (the GMS Program). We reviewed the progress of actions being taken in light of the directives provided by Third GMS Summit of March 2008, particularly in light of the challenges the subregion now faces on account of the current global financial and economic crisis. We convened a retreat session to provide more opportunity for a free flow of discussion on transport and trade facilitation and the next ten-year strategy for the GMS Program.

### Progress under the Vientiane Plan of Action for GMS Development

2. We note that the Vientiane Plan of Action for GMS Development (2008-2012) comprises specific and time-bound initiatives aimed at ensuring that the increased connectivity among the GMS countries is translated into expanded markets, enhanced competitiveness, improved access to social services, greater protection and management of the environment and natural resources. We believe that implementation of the Plan has made good progress.

3. The design and implementation of **transport** projects needed to complete the GMS corridors are advancing well. A notable achievement is the North-South Economic Corridor International Mekong River Bridge (Houayxay-Chiang Khong), whose construction will commence in February 2010 and is expected to be completed by September 2012. A review of the GMS railway sector is under way to design a unified subregional railway development strategy in light of the need for more efficient modes of transport. A more focused and coordinated approach to GMS economic corridor development is being tried through the establishment of the GMS Economic Corridors Forum. Based on this concept, we endorsed the strategies and action plans for the North-South Economic Corridor and the East-West Economic Corridor. Strategic priorities for the corridors include strengthening physical infrastructure by building capacity for trade and transport facilitation. We note that the action plans will be integrated into the agenda of the various GMS sector working groups, as well as in the updated Vientiane Plan of Action.

4. **Transport and trade facilitation** needs to make quicker progress. We noted the preliminary findings of the strategic review of transport and trade facilitation (TTF), which identified key issues constraining the implementation of the Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) and other TTF measures. Meanwhile, we are pleased with: (i) the commencement of the exchange of traffic rights' arrangements among Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam along the East-West Corridor in June 2009, (ii) the increase in quota of vehicles allowed to cross borders under the bilateral road transport agreement between Cambodia and Viet Nam starting in May 2009, (iii) commencement of implementation of bilateral road transport agreement between Cambodia and Lao PDR in April 2009, and (iv) signing of a broader agreement on facilitation of cross-border transport between Lao PDR and Viet Nam in April 2009. Cambodia and Viet Nam will soon implement single-window inspection at the Bavet-Moc Bai border crossing. This will help ensure efficient cross-border movement of goods, vehicles, and people, and augment intraregional trade. We are pleased that the private sector has been more closely engaged in

TTF efforts. We note that the High-Level Symposium on GMS Logistics Cooperation and associated events that were held on 6-10 June 2009 in Kunming, PRC, identified and prioritized the bottlenecks for GMS logistics cooperation and showcased business opportunities for the private sector. We appreciate the work of the GMS Business Forum on the preparation of the GMS Freight Transport Association and the GMS SME Development Fund, and encourage further work.

5. In the **energy** sector, the formulation of a unified set of rules governing power trade and the development of cross-border power transmission links is under way. Work has also commenced on integrating environmental and social concerns in the planning and implementation of subregional power projects. Our countries also agreed on a Road Map to implement the GMS Energy Strategy, which will expand cooperation beyond the electric power sector, improve energy security, and promote environmentally sound energy practices, including the development of renewable energy sources.

6. In **telecommunications**, we are continuing to support the planning and construction of backbone fiber optic links under Phase 2 of the Information Superhighway Network (ISN) project. We are grateful for the assistance from the PRC and various development partners, including the Republic of Korea, for building capacity in the sector, in such areas as policy and regulatory reforms, ISN operation and maintenance, and application of information and communication technology in poverty reduction and rural development.

7. In **agriculture**, efforts to tap biofuels and rural renewable energy have been accelerated while taking into account the need to balance these with concerns over food security. In this respect, we appreciate the completion of an assessment study and plans to prepare a GMS Rural Renewable Energy Project. The Project will examine the role of nontraditional energy sources, such as biomass, biogas, biofuels and agricultural wastes, in meeting the energy demands of rural households, enhancing agricultural production, and improving rural incomes and welfare. Cooperation in transboundary animal disease control has also proceeded well through piloting of vaccination against livestock diseases in the upper and lower Mekong zones, as well as public awareness and communication and capacity building activities. The Agricultural Information and Network Service and GMS Agriculture Science Consortium are also being integrated into the respective national agricultural information and science services and budgets.

8. GMS **tourism** has gained by the recent launch of the *Visit Mekong Years (2009-2010)* campaign and of the [www.exploremekong.org](http://www.exploremekong.org) website, which is dedicated to GMS tourism marketing activities and serves as an interactive platform for the *Explore Mekong* marketing campaign. These will help sustain the increasing trend in annual tourist arrivals in the GMS, which grew from about 10 million in 1995 to about 26 million in 2008. The GMS Tourism Ministers, at their second meeting early this year, have reaffirmed their commitment to sustain a pattern of tourism growth that is more equitable, environmentally sustainable, and sensitive to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, particularly women and ethnic communities. A new GMS Sustainable Tourism Development Project is now underway to support the development of a sustainable, culturally and environmentally sound pro-poor tourism approach for the GMS.

9. In line with the directives given by the Leaders at the Third Summit to focus more sharply on the soft aspects of subregional development, we endorsed a new and consolidated GMS **Human Resource Development** Strategy and Action Plan. This will guide our cooperation in health, education, labor and migration, and social development. We ask that additional support be secured for the Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management so as to

extend its reach and quality. Its innovative research program will further build the capacity of GMS research institutions to address priority subregional development issues and accelerate the transfer of knowledge and technology to GMS member countries. Our joint efforts in the prevention and control of HIV and AIDS, malaria, dengue, and other communicable diseases in border areas are progressing well with expanded assistance from development partners, and are helping to increase coverage of disease preventive measures among targeted populations.

10. In the **GMS Core Environment Program (CEP)**, work has commenced on five supplementary cluster projects for 2009-2011. The cluster approach for the implementation of the CEP, including the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (BCI), will intensify integrated and multi-sectoral planning and development approaches that promote sound environmental practices in the GMS economic corridors. These projects help highlight ecological infrastructure as one of the top priorities for GMS countries and they will also strengthen the subregion's resilience to climate change and help design and develop adaptation initiatives. The new areas of focus include integrating social and environment considerations in tourism and livelihood promotion; promoting BCI and environmental performance assessments in key GMS economic corridors; and undertaking strategic environmental assessments of the energy, freight transport, and agriculture sectors along economic corridors.

11. Our progress would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and support of our **development partners**. We thank them for their substantial investments through direct finance, sharing of experience and expertise, and direct participation in some of our undertakings. Our agenda, however, is becoming larger and more complex, and our partners' support is central to our success. We, therefore, seek their enhanced support through increased financial outlays for capital projects, and expanded technical assistance. We are committed to working more closely with them to maximize resource utilization.

### **Priorities for the Next Three Years**

12. The progress so far indicates that we are broadly on track in pursuing the directives from the Third GMS Summit toward a more inclusive and sustainable development for the subregion. However, given the challenges posed by the global economic downturn and issues associated with climate change, we need to refocus our efforts.

13. In the remaining three years covered by the GMS Strategic Framework (2002-2012), we will give highest priority to the following areas and concerns:

- *Accelerating the implementation of the CBTA and other TTF initiatives.* This is central given that falling global trade flows places a greater role for intra-regional trade in driving the continued expansion of GMS economies. The transaction costs of cross-border trade and investment in the GMS have to be reduced. Solutions relate to looking at key TTF measures, such as the CBTA, the Strategic Framework for Action on Trade Facilitation and Investment, and ASEAN Customs initiatives from a more strategic and integrated perspective. We will strengthen our national and subregional institutional mechanisms for the CBTA and other TTF initiatives, which will ensure closer inter-ministerial and inter-country coordination. We will look for "quick wins", which are necessary to establish credibility and to accelerate momentum for full implementation. We are pleased with renewed efforts by Cambodia and Thailand to identify a new gateway at the Poipet-Aranyaprathet border crossing, which will facilitate the effective implementation of bilateral exchange of traffic rights arrangements and the initial implementation of the CBTA.

- *Transforming the GMS transport corridors into economic corridors.* We recognize that it is the private sector that will eventually make the economic corridors happen. For this, the policies, institutions, rules and facilities that are needed for the private sector to be more competitive and to earn good returns from investments must be quickly introduced. The corridors must be inclusive in nature, and the potential negative social and environmental effects must be mitigated. We note that the ECF now serves to unify and focus initiatives for GMS economic corridor development. The ECF must actively pursue its tasks to achieve its objectives. Simultaneously, we ask all GMS institutions to redouble their efforts in developing the GMS economic corridors to optimize returns from improved physical connectivity in the subregion.
- *Reducing environmental risks to local livelihoods and GMS development plans, including those posed by climate change and poor ecological infrastructure.* We are cognizant of the environmental threats, including climate change and ecological loss, posed to our subregion. Effective measures are needed to counter these threats and to help our countries in adapting to climate change and protecting the ecosystem. In the short-term we see opportunities for the BCI initiative to combine climate change resilience-enhancing and ecosystem protection efforts with effective channeling of economic stimulus to the rural poor within the economic corridors. Among the medium- to long-term priorities are renewable and clean energy, as well as environment-friendly and economically efficient transport and sustainable agricultural development.

## Conclusion

14. We are about to enter the last three-years of the current GMS Strategic Framework. While much has been achieved, much remains to be completed. There is a clear plan for the next three years. But the time to plan for the decade from 2012 is now. Our connectivity has to be enhanced, our markets more integrated, and our capacities to jointly address shared social and environmental concerns visibly strengthened. There will be numerous new challenges, and very likely some complex ones. We need to study these and develop an effective design for tomorrow.

15. We thank the Royal Thai Government, and in particular the GMS Minister for Thailand, His Excellency Virachai Virameteekul, for its gracious hosting of the meeting. We also thank the Asian Development Bank for its assistance in this meeting and for its continued strong partnership with the GMS countries, and support for the GMS Program.

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