

**Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program  
15<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference  
17-19 June 2009**

**Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM)  
Chair's Report to the Ministerial Meeting**

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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.