



**MEETING OF GMS NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS  
Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 7-8 January 2009**

**SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Introduction**

1. Representatives of the National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) of the 6 GMS countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam) met in Ha Noi, Viet Nam on 7-8 January 2009 to prepare for the GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting scheduled on 9 January 2009. Representatives from the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) and the Asian Development Bank also attended the meeting. The meeting was held in conjunction with the ASEAN Tourism Forum 2009 and ASEAN Tourism Ministers' Meeting. A list of participants appears in [Appendix 1](#).

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome Address**

2. H.E. Mr. Tran Chien Thang, Deputy Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and Chairman of Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, welcomed the participants. Mr. Thang acknowledged the substantial contributions of the GMS tourism sector to the socio-economic development of the GMS countries and the crucial roles played by the GMS Tourism Working (TWG), MTCO, ADB, and other development partners. He encouraged all participants to actively contribute to the meeting's deliberations on important items concerning the status and directions of GMS cooperation in tourism in preparation for the GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting scheduled on 9 January 2009.

**Agenda Item 2: Adoption of Agenda**

3. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Tran Chien Thang.
4. The Meeting adopted the provisional agenda, copy in [Appendix 2](#).

**Agenda Item 3: Business Arrangements**

5. Viet Nam briefed the participants about the business arrangements. The meeting was held in plenary. Secretariat support was provided by the MTCO with the assistance of the GMS Secretariat based at the Asian Development Bank.

#### **Agenda Item 4: MTCO Administration**

##### ***(1) Recruitment of Executive Director***

6. Thailand as host country of the recruitment process for the MTCO Executive Director briefed the meeting on the methodology and consequent selection in October 2008 of Mr. John Mason Florence as the new full-time MTCO Executive Director.

7. The Meeting expressed appreciation to Thailand and the members of the Screening Committee for their assistance and support, and welcomed and congratulated Mr. Florence on his selection.

##### ***Decision:***

8. The Meeting agreed that Mr. Florence will have a tenure of two years – commencing on 7 January 2009 and expiring on 6 January 2011 (renewable), and be principally responsible for the implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy 2006-2015, with remuneration, responsibilities, and restrictions in accordance with the provisions of the MTCO Executive Director Contract signed on 7 January 2009 between himself and the GMS NTOs and the terms of reference for the position.

##### ***(2) Assessment of Performance of MTCO Project Coordinator***

9. The Meeting discussed the status of the secondment of Ms. Christine Jacquemin to the Asian Development Bank as Project Coordinator, MTCO, which commenced in August 2007 and will expire in July 2009. The Meeting acknowledged with gratitude the assistance and support provided by the French Government on the secondment of Ms. Jacquemin to ADB and her assignment as MTCO Project Coordinator, and noted that a decision needed to be made as basis for an appropriate approach to French authorities.

10. Representative of Thailand suggested for the Meeting to consider whether to request France for the same kind of support (i.e., secondment of Project Coordinator), or whether to request for another kind or package of support to GMS tourism cooperation. Representatives of the other GMS countries suggested that both avenues of support be requested from France.

##### ***Decision:***

11. The Meeting agreed to request the French Government to renew and continue supporting Ms. Jacquemin's secondment as Project Coordinator in order to ensure continuity of the tourism development work program. The Meeting also requested the MTCO Executive Director to approach the French Government on behalf of the GMS TWG to ask for her contract renewal and seek additional funding support for GMS priority tourism projects.

### ***(3) Use of MTCO Budget***

12. Ms. Saengrawee Thongdee, Office Manager, MTCO, presented the MTCO financial report for the period January-December 2008. All GMS countries have remitted their 2008 contributions, and MTCO's available budget for 2008 amounted to US\$ 158,460.99 (with \$133,460.99 or 84% allocation for operations, and \$25,000 or 16% for marketing). Total expenses for 2008 amounted to \$62,045.01 (\$46,549.97 for operations, and \$15,495.04 for marketing).

13. A proposed utilization of the budget for 2009 expected to come from the balance carried forward from 2008, fresh contributions from the 6 GMS countries of \$15,000 each, and income from hotel registration in booking engine website for marketing and operations was presented for the NTOs consideration. The Meeting, however, felt that the proposed budget for 2009 should have been circulated in advance and that the NTOs should be given sufficient time to review and comment on the proposal. The Meeting also commented on the need to strike a fair balance of budget allocation for marketing and operations, especially now that a full-time Executive Director is on board, and for MTCO to actively generate more funds for MTCO. A related issue raised by Ms. Jacquemin is that MTCO does not have an official/legal status for raising and receiving funds from development partners and other donors.

#### ***Decision:***

14. In consideration of the fact that the new MTCO Executive Director has just officially come on board, the Meeting deferred decision on the proposed 2009 budget and requested the MTCO Executive Director to submit and circulate to the NTOs within 4 weeks, for their consideration and endorsement, a detailed proposed budget and work plan that would provide a balanced budget allocation for marketing and operational expenses, provide detailed justification for the proposed expenses, and take into account intensified efforts for fund raising for MTCO.

15. In the meantime, the Meeting approved the utilization of the budget for running expenses (salaries, utilities, and communication).

### ***(4) Rotation of Location of MTCO***

16. Representative of Myanmar recalled the discussions at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group (TWG-22) held in Nay Pyi Taw in October 2008 regarding the possible rotation of location of MTCO and its tourism marketing and development functions every two years, starting with Cambodia in 2010.

17. The Meeting discussed the merits and disadvantages of locating the MTCO from its current location in Bangkok which is seen as an ideal location. The Meeting recognized that there are other considerations, including the practicality of physical movement of equipment, records, and other physical assets, the need to define the requirements and conditions for rotation, the responsibilities of the host country, and the requirements from MTCO. Meanwhile, Thailand, as the current host, reiterated her willingness to continue hosting the MTCO.

***Decision:***

18. The Meeting agreed to maintain the current location of MTCO in Bangkok.

**Agenda Item 5: Progress Report on Tourism Marketing Plan**

***(1) Proposed Tourism Marketing Activities***

19. Mr. Florence reported on the status of the GMS Tourism Marketing Plan and presented some proposed institutional considerations impacting on marketing (e.g., refinements in the MTCO name, logo). Proposed tourism marketing activities for 2009 to be funded from the marketing fund and to be augmented by additional contribution from the GMS countries were discussed. The Explore the Mekong campaign is ready to roll, and the operational website [www.exploremekong.org](http://www.exploremekong.org), is in place to serve as the booking engine for the campaign.

20. Several options for the slogan to be linked to the marketing logo were presented.

***Decisions:***

21. Due to very tight time constraint, the Meeting decided to defer further discussion on this item and the other remaining items in the NTOs Meeting Agenda to the following day.

22. Recognizing that the GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting would be similarly limited by time constraints, the Meeting requested Viet Nam as Chairman of the GMS NTOs Meeting to present a summary report to the Ministers on the outcome of the NTOs meeting. It was agreed that MTCO presentations of progress reports on tourism marketing and development would be limited to just 5 minutes each and focus on what have been achieved, without raising issues that the NTOs have not agreed upon previously.

23. Following are the summary of proceedings of the discussions held on 8 January 2009 focusing on items that remained to be reviewed in preparation for the GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting.

**Revised Mekong Tourism Marketing Update**

24. Mr. Florence presented an abbreviated update on the Mekong Tourism Marketing Plan and Explore the Mekong Campaign. The new website [www.ExploreMekong.org](http://www.ExploreMekong.org) is cross linked with the Mekong Tourism institutional website at [www.MekongTourism.org](http://www.MekongTourism.org). Both sites were developed by Softech Business Solutions. The marketing website features the latest Mekong news, event news and resources. Content tabs allow users to explore sites on Mekong destinations, people and society, "Frontiers" section designated for pro-poor tourism development, maps, user generated video clips uploaded on YouTube and Explore Mekong Channel, among others. MTCO is also developing a detailed Explore Mekong Events and Festivals calendar and a guide to various activities available in the subregion. A copy of his presentation is in [Appendix 3](#).

25. The Meeting made the following suggestions to MTCO: (i) get prior clearance/approval on information/data from concerned GMS countries to avoid negative and unwanted information from being printed or launched for public viewing; (ii) link the MTCO website with the official websites of the GMS NTOs; and (iii) consider providing translations in GMS country languages.

**Agenda Item 6: MTCO Priority Project Development Report**

26. Ms. Christine Jacquemin, MTCO Project Coordinator, reported on her achievements for the period January-December 2008, including the preparation of the status report and action plan for 2008-2010 covering the agreed priority projects under the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy (classified into short, medium, and long-term) and which were eventually incorporated in the Vientiane Plan of Action endorsed by the GMS Leaders at the Third GMS Summit in March 2008. Four top priority projects were eventually agreed upon in consultation with TWG, namely: tourism and biodiversity conservation, pro-poor tourism, developing tourism corridors, and vocational training for SMEs. Subsequently, 3 workshops were held between September-November 2008, and a fourth one planned to be held in mid-February 2009, with funding support from the French Government and ADB. The workshops aimed at defining the scope of subregional projects and developing relevant project proposals based on inputs and consensual agreements from different stake holders concerned, then validated with the guidance of a Task Force created for each topic. Ms. Jacquemin reported that a proposal for Tourism and Biodiversity Conservation has been finalized and circulated to GMS NTOs and task force, and further inputs from prospective partners such as UNESCO and IUCN. A project proposal for Pro-poor Tourism is now being completed, and one for GMS Tourism Corridors is under development. The final 4 project proposals will be presented at a donors' conference to be organized by MTCO with ADB support in early 2009. She also reported on her other activities, leading to the positioning of the MTCO as a regional actor for tourism development and the relaunch of the institutional website [www.mekongtourism.org](http://www.mekongtourism.org), which has been developed into a regional knowledge platform to disseminate information, encourage and facilitate sustainable development and responsible tourism in the GMS. A copy of Ms. Jacquemin's presentation is in Appendix 4.

**Agenda Item 7: Review of Draft Agenda of GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting**

27. The Meeting reviewed and endorsed the revised Draft Agenda of the GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting presented by Viet Nam, copy attached as Appendix 5. The GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting is scheduled at 9:00-10:30 AM on 9 January 2009.

**Agenda Item 8: Review of Draft GMS Tourism Ministers' Joint Statement**

28. The Meeting considered and endorsed the revised Draft GMS Tourism Ministers' Statement presented by MTCO Executive Director, copy attached as Appendix 6.

**Agenda Item 9: Arrangements for Mekong Media Briefing**

29. The Meeting agreed that there was no need for the MTCO Executive Director to brief the Ministers about his preparations.

**Agenda Item 10: Date and Venue of the 23<sup>rd</sup> GMS TWG Meeting**

30. Details on the date and venue of the 23<sup>rd</sup> GMS TWG Meeting will be communicated later.

**Closing Session**

31. The Chairperson expressed his thanks to the participants for their valuable inputs to the Meeting. In turn, the participants expressed their sincere appreciation to the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for the warm hospitality and efficient arrangements made for the meeting. The meeting also expressed thanks to the MTCO and GMS Secretariat based at ADB for their technical and secretariat support.