



**SECOND GMS TOURISM MINISTERS' MEETING
Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 9 January 2009**

JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Introduction

1. We, the Tourism Ministers from the six GMS countries, namely, Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Union of Myanmar, Kingdom of Thailand, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, met in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, on 9 January 2009, joined by the Country Director of the ADB Resident Mission in Viet Nam, MTCO staff, and representatives of development partners, international organizations, and diplomatic corps.

2. The Leaders' directives at the Third GMS Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR in March 2008 aimed to ensure that the increased connectivity in GMS is translated into expanded markets, enhanced competitiveness, improved access to social services, greater protection of environment and cultural heritage and better management of shared natural resources. Their new directives to guide the tourism sector are to (i) strengthen sustainable management of natural and cultural tourism sites; (ii) promote joint marketing of tourism in the sub-region; and (iii) strengthen the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office.

Progress of Cooperation in Tourism

3. We are pleased that the growth of tourism industry has continued to show an upward trend within the GMS in 2008 and we hope that the tourism sector would remain resilient despite the global financial downturn.

4. A new website www.exploremekong.org dedicated to GMS tourism marketing activities has been officially launched to serve as an interactive platform for the Explore Mekong marketing campaign.

5. We are pleased that MTCO has organized workshops, funded by ADB and the French Government, to jumpstart the implementation of priority projects under the Tourism Development Plan and develop detailed project proposals that will be presented to a development partners' meeting in 2009 to mobilize additional resources.

6. We are pleased that the new MTCO Executive Director is finally on board to drive GMS tourism marketing and development agenda forward and coordinate the implementation of the Tourism Sector Strategy.

7. We wish to acknowledge the generous support extended by the Government of France to the strengthening of the MTCO through secondment of the Project Coordinator and wish to request France and ADB to extend this support. We appreciate continued financial and technical support provided by ADB as well as collaboration from other development partners.

8. We appreciate Thailand's initiative in launching the Visit GMS Years 2009-2010.

Future Directions

9. We will take advantage of the improved and expanded sub-regional infrastructure and connectivity in order to further promote tourism growth in the sub-region in a sustainable and socially responsible manner. We will continue to work together in intensifying our efforts in promoting the GMS as a single tourist destination in the face of the global economic slowdown that we are now experiencing.

10. We call on the TWG and the MTCO to mobilize the required resources, and look forward to a fruitful outcome from the development partners' meeting that MTCO and ADB will organize during the year to further expand mutually beneficial partnerships in carrying out our priority initiatives.

11. We express our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Viet Nam for hosting this Second Meeting of the GMS Tourism Ministers and for the hospitality extended to our delegations to ensure our pleasant stay.