

Subregional Trade Facilitation Working Group: Terms of Reference

Background

The Subregional Trade Facilitation Working Group (TFWG) was established under the GMS Economic Cooperation Program to serve as an advisory body on issues in facilitating trade in the subregion. It was established by the Third Ministerial Conference on Subregional Cooperation in April 1994 in Hanoi, Viet Nam (under the name Subregional Trade Working Committee). The TFWG reports to the Ministerial Conference and to the respective governments.

Rationale

As the economies of the subregion open up to, and become increasingly integrated through trade and investment, there is a need for enhanced cooperation in improving the ability for the participating economies to exchange products and relevant services effectively. The principal focus of the TFWG is on facilitating trade-related transactions through the improvement and coordination of trade-related procedures, processes and information, to contribute to the growth of its member countries through increasing trade-related integration with each other, and with the broader regional/global economy.

Main Objectives

The TFWG has the following objectives:

- Provide a venue for identifying constraints (e.g. regulatory, legal) that affect procedures, processes, practices and tools for facilitating trade-related transactions in the subregion;
- Provide a vehicle for cooperation related to the improvement and coordination of procedures and processes related to the subregion;
- Provide a vehicle for improving the availability and consistency of trade-related information, and the application of information-technology to trade facilitation;
- Provide a venue for institutional cooperation among participating countries in formulating and implementing appropriate trade facilitation strategies and mechanism.

Membership

Each GMS country will be represented by senior-level officials from government agencies responsible for/related to trade facilitation. Senior representatives of trade-related agencies could be involved, as required, with private sector participation as deemed appropriate by the Working Group.

Chairperson and Venue

The venue (host country) for the TFWG meetings will be rotated among the participating countries. The host country will provide the Chairperson of the TFWG the necessary technical, administrative, and coordinating support for the TFWG activities. In the initial

years, ADB and ESCAP may, at the invitation of the TFWG, assist in the conduct of the TFWG meetings.

Frequency of TFWG Meetings

The TFWG will meet once a year or more frequently, depending on its work program.

TFWG Meetings Held

- Second Meeting of the Trade Facilitation Working Group, 28-29 June 2001, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- Workshop on Customs Facilitation in the GMS, 22-23 May 2001, Hat Yai, Thailand
- Meeting of the Ad Hoc Subgroup on Customs Matters, 11 January 2000, ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines
- Inception Meeting of the Trade Facilitation Working Group, 1-2 November 1999, Bangkok, Thailand