



## **THIRTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE GMS TOURISM WORKING GROUP (TWG-36)**

**7 January 2016, 0900-1500 H  
Nan, Thailand**

### **Summary of Proceedings**

#### **Introduction**

1. The Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group (TWG-36) was held on 7 January 2016 in Nan Province, Thailand. The meeting was co-organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO), and attended by representatives of the National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) of the six GMS countries (Cambodia, People's Republic of China [PRC], Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam), MTCO, Thailand Research Fund, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). A copy of the List of Participants is in [Appendix 1](#).

#### **Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Opening Remarks**

2. In her Welcome Remarks, Ms. Wanasiri Morakul, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (MoTS), Thailand, welcomed participants to Nan Province, considered one of Thailand's "twelve hidden gems". She mentioned that the Thai Government is considering proposing Nan to UNESCO as a world heritage site because of its ancient town and historic linkage to Luang Prabang in Lao PDR. She said that the Government of Thailand attaches importance to connectivity with neighboring countries and has identified several special economic zones to encourage economic development along the economic corridors. Last year tourism arrivals in Thailand reached 29.8 million. She thanked ADB for its continued support for tourism development including the ongoing GMS Tourism Infrastructure for Inclusive Growth Project 1 and the planned GMS Tourism Infrastructure for Inclusive Growth Project 2. Thailand looks forward to continued cooperation in tourism with the other GMS countries, development partners, private sector and civil society.

3. In her Opening Remarks, Ms. Sandra Nicoll, Country Director, ADB Lao PDR Resident Mission, noted that the meeting marked an important milestone in GMS Tourism cooperation as it would be the final meeting under the framework of the first GMS Tourism Sector Strategy that concluded in 2015, and the first time that the working group would be discussing strategic priorities for the next strategy to cover 2016-2025. Looking back over the past 10 years, TWG's collective efforts to promote the GMS as a world-class tourism destination together with tourism industry partners has culminated in a record high of over 53 million international tourist arrivals to the subregion in 2015, generating over \$60 billion in receipts and sustaining about 6 million jobs. Concrete examples of TWG's innovative approach to promote more inclusive and balanced tourism growth in the subregion are embodied in the newly adopted GMS Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan, the [mekongtourism.org](http://mekongtourism.org) website, and the annual Mekong Tourism Forum. Building on the successful 20<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference in September

2015, tourism is expected to play a prominent role in supporting the GMS Leaders' emphasis on inclusive and sustainable development and the achievement of the new Sustainable Development Goals. ADB is pleased to be supporting several tourism-related investment projects and technical assistance that are prioritized in the GMS Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan.

4. Mr. Jens Thraenhart, Executive Director, MTCO, thanked the Thailand Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Department of Tourism for hosting the meetings in Nan, and hoped that participants could find time to explore the sights of this beautiful town. He said that MTCO staff would provide meeting participants with memory sticks containing all meeting documents, the new GMS Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan, and other tourism-related knowledge products.

5. Copies of the welcome and opening remarks are in Appendix 2.

**Agenda Item 2: Adoption of the Agenda**

6. The meeting adopted the provisional agenda, copy in Appendix 3.

**Agenda Item 3: Business Arrangements**

7. Representative of the MoTS, Thailand, briefed participants on business arrangements and the program.

**Agenda Item 4: Follow-up of the 20<sup>th</sup> Greater Mekong Sub-region Ministerial Conference, 9-10 September 2015, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar**

8. Mr. Steven Schipani, Senior Portfolio Management Specialist, ADB Lao Resident Mission, briefed the meeting on the outcomes of the 20<sup>th</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference held on 9-10 September 2015 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar and their implications on the Tourism sector. The theme of the Conference was "Taking Action for Inclusive and Sustainable Development". The main conference was preceded by a GMS Senior Officials' Meeting held on 9 Sept. GMS Ministers, Senior Officials and their respective delegations, development partners, representatives of the private sector and civil society, and ADB staff attended. One of the six deliverables presented to the Conference was the GMS Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan 2015-2020, for notation by the GMS Ministers. The Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan, which was well received at the Conference, sets out a concrete plan to cost-effectively promote multi-country travel, increase market awareness, and improve market linkages between the GMS countries. Other deliverables for the Conference included the new GMS Urban Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan that feature urban tourism development elements, and the GMS Projects Database, an online platform that enables countries, development partners, the private sector, and other interested stakeholders to access information about projects in the GMS Program. See [www.gmsprogram.org](http://www.gmsprogram.org).

9. Mr. Schipani mentioned another deliverable presented to the GMS Ministers was the first progress report on the GMS Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan (RIF-IP), which covers all the priority sectors of the GMS Program, including Tourism. The progress report for the Tourism sector showed that one tourism investment project (GMS Tourism Infrastructure for Inclusive Growth) and one technical assistance project (Strengthening the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office) were ongoing and proceeding well. Technical assistance project on Preparing the New GMS Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2026 will be included in the

scope of the project preparatory TA for the Second GMS Tourism for Infrastructure for Inclusive Growth Project. The RIF-IP progress report, however, lacked information on the status of the investment project Construction of the Sino-Vietnamese Detian-Ban Gioc Waterfalls International Cooperation Zone. The meeting requested updates from PRC and Viet Nam for the next progress report, due in January 2016.

10. Mr. Schipani presented excerpts from the Joint Ministerial Declaration issued at the conclusion of the Conference, wherein the GMS Ministers welcomed the new GMS Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan, and also recognized ongoing efforts by the GMS Tourism Working Group towards strengthening the MTCO and having it established as an inter-governmental organization, and updating the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy for 2016-2026 which they expect to be completed in 2016.

11. A copy of the presentation is in [Appendix 4](#).

**Agenda Item 5: Report and Follow-up of the 35<sup>th</sup> GMS Tourism Working Group Meeting**

12. Viet Nam briefed the meeting on the outcomes of TWG-35 and MTF 2015 held in June 2015 in Danang, Viet Nam. A copy of the presentation is in [Appendix 5](#).

**Agenda Item 6: Implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy 2011-2015**

**Agenda Item 7: GMS Tourism Marketing Strategy 2015-2020**

**Agenda Item 8: Achievement of 2015 Work Plan and Proposed 2016 Work Plan**

**Note: Agenda Items 6-8 were combined and covered the following presentations and discussions.**

**i. Country Presentations:**

**Cambodia:**

13. Cambodia presented a country report on updated Tourism Statistics. International tourist arrivals have increased sharply over the last 10 years and in 2015 reached 4.6 million. Top tourist market is Viet Nam, followed by PRC, ROK, and Lao PDR. There are 20 international check points with Viet Nam (10), Thailand (8), Lao PDR (1), with one seaport, and 3 airports. Tourist arrivals are projected to increase to 7.5 million by 2020. Cambodia also reported on the outcome of the recent Southern Corridor Meeting attended by participants from Thailand, Viet Nam and Cambodia. The meeting suggested the establishment of new tour packages focusing on cultural, historical and natural potential of the Southern Tourism Corridor. Regarding the GMS Tourism Statistics Harmonization program led by Cambodia, the Ministry of Tourism is planning a 2-day workshop to discuss and agree on how to improve GMS statistics harmonization, possibly in March 2016. Representatives from all GMS countries, experts from statistics divisions and other relevant government organizations, PATA and TAT will be invited.

**Open Discussion:**

14. Regarding the Southern Corridor Meeting, Viet Nam remarked that they are working on a familiarization tour for media and tour operators, linking Viet Nam, PRC and Cambodia, to be conducted in March-April 2016 to coincide with Annual Tourism Year of Viet Nam.

15. Cambodia noted that Viet Nam is proposed to host the next Southern Corridor Meeting. In turn, Viet Nam confirmed their readiness to host the Meeting and will inform the exact date and venue later.

16. Thailand expressed willingness to share their experience on collection of tourism statistics data with other GMS countries.

## **PRC**

17. PRC representative expressed regrets that representatives from Guangxi and Yunnan were unable to attend the meeting, and stated that a detailed country report will be shared at the next meeting.

18. Mr. Schipani shared information about the successful training program on tourism management held at Guilin Tourism University in 2015. For the first time, all ASEAN countries sent participants to the training. Another one-week ASEAN + PRC training program will be conducted during September/October 2016.

## **Lao PDR**

19. Lao PDR reported that for the first 9 months of 2015, there were 3.4 million international tourist arrivals, representing an increase of 13%, primarily from Asia Pacific market, most notably Thailand. Viet Nam and PRC are also top markets. Australian and Japanese markets both decreased, while the European market saw an overall slight increase, and the Americas saw an overall slight decrease. Several activities were undertaken in line with the strategic thrusts of the GMS TSS, including tourism-related HRD (support to the Lao National University under the Sustainable Tourism Development Project to improve curricula for tourism studies and produce teaching materials in 17 subjects for Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Hotel and Tourism Management as well as support to the Lao National Institute of Hospitality for short- and medium-term training in hospitality, hotel and tourism management under the “Passport to Success” program with support from the Government of Luxembourg), improvement of tourism infrastructure and facilities in the EWEC, NSEC, and other selected destinations in Lao PDR, and development of community-based tourism and supply chain products.

## **Myanmar**

20. Myanmar presented a report on Tourism-Related Human Resource Development. From 2011 to 2015, a total of 269 mid and senior level officials attended capacity building programs abroad, while 134 ministry staff underwent domestic training. Capacity building programs included English as a second language, B.A. Tourism Program for tourism institutions, tourism and hospitality vocational and cascade training, tour guide training, hotel service training basic course, and hotel service on-job training course. The ongoing HRD project is supported by the Myanmar-Luxembourg Development Cooperation, and will run for 5 years (starting in 2014), and covers government, education, and industry sectors. There are also several sustainable tourism development-related projects supported by other partners including Italy, Japan, Norway, and ADB (Economic Empowerment of the Poor and Women in East-West Economic Corridor).

21. Myanmar also reported progress on promoting The Middle Path, a priority multicountry route in the new GMS Marketing Strategy and Action Plan, and tremendous increase in

international tourist arrivals (170% growth in 2015). The Program covers tourist product development including cave tourism and caravan tours.

## **Thailand**

22. Tourism Authority of Thailand, as the lead coordinator to promote the Mekong Discovery Trail, reported an ASEAN Friendship Caravan will be organized to promote multi-country tourism, scheduled for 7-16 January 2016. The caravan will cover 3,400 km along selected routes in Thailand, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, and Cambodia (Bangkok-Buriram-Ubon Ratchathani-Pakse-Attapeu-Gia Lai-Dalat-Mui Ne-HCMC). About 40 Thai and international media and ASEAN tour operators are expected to participate. Thailand has also developed promotional materials for Two Kingdoms, One Destination to promote Khmer-influenced historical attractions in Thailand and Cambodia.

23. Thailand Research Fund reported on the following research projects: (i) "Guidelines for Developing Baan Huak Boundary Post in Preparation for Cross-Border Tourism" linking 1 route by boat and 3 routes by car, and suggested that some basic infrastructure and information could be improved with the help of MTCO and ADB; (ii) Development of Potential of "East Lanna for Experiential Tourism Hub in the Mekong Region" to investigate tourism resources and activities; (iii) Development of experiential tourism in Mekong Region which aims to provide guidelines to develop experiential tourism activities from cultural and natural perspective; and (iv) Development of entrepreneurs in Eastern Lanna in preparation for being the hub of experiential tourism which will provide training to entrepreneurs and create an international community of tourism entrepreneurs in the areas linking Thailand, Lao PDR, and Myanmar.

## **Open Discussion:**

24. Viet Nam congratulated and appreciated Thailand's initiative on ASEAN Friendship Caravan, and committed to contribute to its success.

25. Lao PDR noted the similarity between the Thai Research Foundation projects with their activity under the GMS Marketing Strategy and suggested that these could be linked.

26. Mr. Schipani suggested that research results could be shared by the Thai Research Fund with TWG and also uploaded in the MTCO website, subject to their consent.

## **Action/Decision Point:**

27. **MTCO will coordinate with the Thai Research Fund regarding uploading of the results of their research projects/surveys in the MTCO website.**

## **Viet Nam**

28. Viet Nam received 7.9 m international arrivals (0.9%+) in 2015. Among GMS countries, there were decreases from Cambodia, PRC, and Lao PDR, but increase for Thailand. Viet Nam hoped to see more arrivals from GMS countries this year. Viet Nam reported that their tourism law passed in 2005 will be revised this year. A number of events are planned, details will be put up in the website, including new international exhibition/fair focusing on beach and MICE tourism in Danang; international conference combining tourism and sports in Danang 22-24 Sept 2016 which is a ministerial conference with UNWTO and international Olympics

committee secretariat. Invitations to these events will be sent out to the other GMS countries. Viet Nam gave an example of tour packages being developed, covering Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam, and also shared information about Mekong River Tours and EVEC Tour packages featuring tourist attractions along the corridor.

## **MTCO**

29. Mr. Thraenhart, MTCO, gave an update on MTCO's activities. On MTCO operations, he reported that the new Operations Manager and Operations assistant are on board. The 2015 work plan is in progress. On asset protection, all domain names as well as social media accounts are centrally managed and protected. The 2015 Mekong Tourism Forum and two meetings of the Mekong Tourism Advisory Group have been organized. Mekong Tourism Awards concept is moving from an awards program into a showcase program, looking to identify experiential tourism products, and showcasing best practices and case studies on responsible tourism. Mekong tourism scorecard is ongoing, with 2015 data being collected.

30. On Marketing and Branding, MTCO is lacking resources to carry out brand review and hire a marketing agency. The GMS Tourism Marketing Strategy and Action Plan has been endorsed and was presented at the 20<sup>th</sup> GMS MC, and also uploaded to the [www.mekongtourism.org](http://www.mekongtourism.org) website. The website was successfully launched at MTF 2015 in Danang, with more functionality added, and looking to increase industry engagement. The website has seen a 40% improvement in Global Website ranking by Alexa with 293% increase in visits. The website recently awarded a Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) Adrian Award for 2015. This will help build credibility to further engage with industry. On website statistics, between July and Dec 2015, there were 14,005 visitors, and MTCO expects to see more traffic once the website is linked with GMS country websites. Increasing traffic is also seen in the social media platform. Newsletter has seen 25% open rate. Email has high open rate from the U.S., Thailand, and Japan. Library now contains over 231 documents (ahead of the planned 180 documents). MTCO requests the countries to submit documents and articles for the website, add a link (in the form of banners and badges) to MekongTourism.org, and to get engaged on the @TourismMekong social media accounts. Due to the fact that no advertising budget is available to drive traffic, assistance of the countries is essential to promote the website organically and collaboratively. The event calendar features consumer events, travel and trade events, and tourism events. MTCO asks the countries to submit their consumer and travel trade events in their respective countries, as well as public holidays, to be added to the events calendar. An interactive map has been created to plot the thematic routes and is linked to the website and multi-country journeys with story-telling format. Several media press releases featuring Mekong tourism initiatives have been featured. On thematic marketing, with food campaign as possible topic, a strategy concept paper has been drafted. The first Mekong Tourism Marketing Workshop was held at MTF 2015 in cooperation with UNWTO, PATA, GSTC, ATTA, and Thammasat University, and a summary report was put together highlighting results of the discussions with public and private sector on food tourism, Community-based tourism, river-based tourism, and adventure tourism. Fam trips in the Southern Coastal Corridor have been completed successfully. Mekong responsible tourism database is at 50% completion, and the project is being merged with the Mekong Tourism Experiential Showcase, and the formerly planned Mekong Innovative Tourism Awards. GMS Triathlon was successfully held in Thailand. On capacity training, MTCO contributed to the Tourism Management Training at Guilin Tourism University. In summary, most initiatives in 2015 work plan have been accomplished. MTCO Executive Director participated in several events, including tourism bloggers exchanges, Asia Travel Bloggers Awards, and UNWTO Conference on Buddhist Circuits in South Asia. The MTCO Operations Manager participated at

the UNWTO Workshop on River-based Tourism due to her past experience in river based tourism.

Lectures at various universities, such as Bangkok University have led to the recruitment of interns at no cost to MTCO.

#### **Open Discussion:**

31. Mr. Schipani thanked MTCO, noting that performance has improved dramatically over the past year, and suggested that progress reports could contain a better mix of qualitative and quantitative targets. He noted that it would be useful to track how many businesses and individuals are using the database – for consideration in preparing the next work plan. He underscored the importance of setting targets and then assessing realistic achievement of those targets. Emphasizing that the work plan is covers the work of the entire TWG, he congratulated all GMS NTOs and their partners on a successful 2015.

#### **GMS TWG – 2016 Work Plan**

32. Mr. Thraenhart presented planned and potential key initiatives for 2016 including MTF 2016, GMS Tourism Ministers' Meeting, website and social media content updates, monthly e-Newsletter, Mekong Moments Campaign, blogger fam trip, mobile app, Responsible Tourism database and Mekong Experiential showcase, verified contributor program, memberships (PATA, SKAL), Food Tourism Strategy, white paper "How to Work with Bloggers", Mekong Tourism branding review, collateral piece, Mekong video clip, MeTAG Meeting, media program and database, travel agency program and database, development partner collaboration, mini-Chinese language website and social media, travel trade show participation, and partnerships. MTCO plans to work actively to have content contributors engaged to further enhance the website.

33. Mr. Thraenhart requested TWG to confirm the items proposed in the 2016 work plan and to send to MTCO any additional activities that they propose to be included. It was agreed that MTCO would circulate the updated TWG 2016 Work Plan to TWG after the meeting.

34. Lao PDR suggested that the activities in the work plan be clearly identified as to which ones are to be led by MTCO, which activities the countries and MTCO would do together, and which the countries would lead on their own. Mr. Schipani suggested that the work plan could also capture the proposed 2016 tourism training program in Guilin and the preparation of the new GMS TSS.

35. It was agreed that MTCO would circulate the revised 2016 work plan to TWG by 15 January 2016.

36. Copies of the documents under Agenda Items 6-8 are attached as [Appendix 5](#).

#### **Action/Decision Point:**

37. **MTCO to circulate the revised 2016 work plan to TWG before 1 February 2016. Countries will send their comments to MTCO by 15 February 2016.**

#### **Agenda Item 9: Development of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2026**

38. Mr. Steven Schipani, ADB, presented a concept note and plan for developing the new GMS Tourism Sector Strategy (TSS) for 2016-2026 (copy attached as [Appendix 6](#)). The new

Strategy is meant to succeed the current TSS covering the period 2005-2015 and to meet the changing structure of tourism demand and supply and new international commitments regarding Sustainable Development Goals, the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community, and alignment with the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan for 2016-2025. The new Strategy will take into consideration the strong comparative advantage of the GMS for multi-country travel and for promoting multiple visits to the subregion. It will also try to address some unfinished business under the current TSS, including persistent imbalanced growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and negative social impacts of tourism. In this regard, ADB expressed its readiness to provide technical assistance estimated at \$200,000 to support international and national consultants to help the TWG prepare the strategy. Meanwhile, countries are requested to provide in-kind support for counterpart staff inputs, data and reports, and some workshop logistics and coordination.

39. Mr. Schipani requested TWG-36 to give guidance on the final TA design, prior to appointments of country TA counterparts and mobilization of consultants in February/March 2016, to be followed by the holding of country consultative workshops. A draft report is expected to be submitted to the NTOs and ADB by June 2016, followed by a subregional workshop concurrent with TWG-37 in Cambodia. The report is due to be finalized in July/August 2016, for subsequent endorsement by the GMS Ministers at the 21<sup>st</sup> GMS Ministerial Conference planned in the last quarter of 2016.

#### **Open Discussion:**

40. Viet Nam requested more time to review and provide inputs to the concept note and consultants TOR.

41. Mr. Schipani inquired from Viet Nam about the ASEAN's approach on a new tourism strategic plan. Viet Nam responded that there are working groups and committees to oversee various activities. The GMS on the other hand has done a lot to boost tourism in the subregion but the countries should continue to strengthen facilities, service quality, and improve infrastructure. For the new GMS strategy, the TWG should consider framing it around a unique theme for the subregion, such as the Mekong River.

42. Thailand remarked on the need to do SWOT analysis for each country. Mr. Schipani agreed that this could be emphasized in the terms of reference. TAT stressed that the GMS tourism strategy should not duplicate ASEAN, and should emphasize core activities for the GMS and what the countries do best in the subregion. Lao PDR asked for clarification about the consultative workshops and whether this is to be done collectively or separately, and emphasized the need to consider the lessons learned from the implementation of the previous TSS where each country took the lead for a specific area – an arrangement that sometimes worked well, and sometimes did not. Lao PDR recalled that there was a subregional workshop in developing the first TSS, then the consultant organized separate national workshops, and the final workshop was again a subregional workshop.

43. Mr. Schipani replied that there would be national and regional consultations under the TA and the workshops could follow past practice. He noted that the first TSS might have been overambitious and agreed the new strategy should focus on unique aspects of the GMS, not only for marketing but also for developing products. He agreed that it may not be practical to designate lead countries for projects as was done under the past strategy.

44. Mr. Schipani agreed with PRC's suggestion for the countries to clearly identify their investment and environment priority areas, considering potential economic and social returns.



Myanmar agreed on need to identify unique features of each country that could be used for marketing and promotion activities, and to think about accessible tourism by giving opportunity for village communities to participate in tourism activities. Cambodia would like to see a balance between tourism infrastructure development and tourism product development, and to diversify tourism development to the coastal areas. Mr. Schipani noted that there is a lot of country-to-country assistance that could be incorporated in the strategy on top of private sector and development partner financing. Viet Nam suggested a review of the implementation of the first TSS is included in the TOR, to ensure alignment with current country strategies, and focus on subregional activities for the next TSS. Mr. Schipani agreed that the subregional strategy would need to be aligned with the country strategies and other regional cooperation initiatives in tourism.

**Action/Decision Point:**

**45. Mr. Schipani will circulate the revised concept note/TOR for country/MTCO comments by 15 January, for comment by 29 January 2016. NTOs are requested to nominate focal staff to work/coordinate with ADB in developing the new TSS.**

**Agenda Item 10: GMS Tourism Performance 2015**

46. Ms. Pawinee Sunalai, ADB Consultant, gave a brief presentation on the overall performance of GMS Tourism for 2015 (copy attached as Appendix 7), and requested countries submit any missing data as soon as possible. Based on information available from January to September 2015, international visitor arrivals in the 5 GMS countries and Guangxi and Yunnan, PRC reached almost 48 million, with Asia-Pacific as the top source market by region, followed by Europe and the Americas. Tourism investment was at \$34.5 billion, direct contribution to employment (full time equivalent) at 6 million, and direct contribution to GDP at about 8%. From 2004-2015 the number of arrivals tripled in some countries and has reached the target set out in the TSS 2005 – 2015, the same holds for total receipts which amounted to over \$52.4 billion. On mode of arrival, 61% arrived by air and 37% arrived by land, the latter increasing every year. 70% of tourist arrivals came from Asia-Pacific. Ms. Pawinee requested the NTOs to provide updates up to 31 December 2015, so that the infographics could be revised and put up in the website.

**Action/Decision Point:**

**47. TWG members are requested to provide updates on tourism performance up to 31 December 2015 to MTCO by end of January 2016 to enable MTCO to revise the infographics and put it up in the website.**

**Agenda Item 11: Date and Venue of the Next GMS TWG Meeting and MTF 2016**

48. As host of the next TWG Meeting (TWG-37), Cambodia proposed to host TWG-37 and MTF 2016 during 6-8 July 2016 in Sihanoukville. Cambodia will provide land transportation to delegates travelling from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville. Another option could be for delegates to fly to Siem Reap then proceed to Sihanoukville.

49. Mr. Thraenhart presented a draft agenda of MTF 2016 (copy attached as Appendix 8) and requested inputs/suggestions from TWG members. MTCO is looking to organize a similar event as was done in Viet Nam last year and would welcome suggestions from TWG.

50. Viet Nam thanked MTCO and hoped that MTCO could do even better than last year. Viet Nam suggested for Cambodia to consider organizing a workshop during MTF with development partners in attendance, to present the draft GMS TSS 2016–2025 to get their comments/inputs.

**Action/Decision Points:**

**51. MTCO to work closely with host Cambodia in preparing the agenda/program of TWG-37, MTF 2016, and other associated events including the suggested development partner’s workshop.**

**Agenda Item 12: Preparation for the GMS Tourism Ministerial Meeting**

52. In planning the contemplated GMS Tourism Ministers’ Meeting, Mr. Schipani suggested that TWG could first determine the purpose for convening the meeting, what to include in the program/agenda, and what are the substantive issues that TWG would like the Tourism Ministers to discuss.

53. Cambodia indicated that they would be pleased to host the Tourism Ministers if all the countries agree to have it back-to-back with TWG-37 in July 2016.

54. Viet Nam and other countries noted they would need to consult higher authorities about the planned Tourism Ministers’ Meeting.

55. The Meeting recognized the uncertainty that the MTCO Agreement would be ready to be signed by the Ministers in July, given past experience with similar agreements in ASEAN, and the need for extensive internal consultations on the Agreement’s provisions which would involve other line ministries such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Finance. With regard to the new TSS, Mr. Schipani indicated that while the draft report of the Second TSS might be ready by July, there is uncertainty that the new Strategy would be ready to be presented to the Tourism Ministers for endorsement. At most perhaps, the Ministers could agree in July on the strategic thrusts and directions of the new TSS.

**Action/Decision Point:**

**56. The contemplated GMS Tourism Ministers’ Meeting was not confirmed, given the uncertainty about the completion by the countries of the internal consultation and clearance procedures to sign for the Draft Agreement on the Establishment of the MTCO, as well as the need for sufficient time to prepare the final draft of the new GMS Tourism Sector Strategy.**

**Agenda Item 13: Other Matters**

57. There was no other matter discussed.

**Closing Session**

58. Chairperson expressed her thanks and appreciation to the participants for their active contribution to the success of the meeting.