

TA-9918: Connecting the Railways of the Greater Mekong Subregion, Phase 2

AN UPDATE

The Purpose

- Continuation of ADB Support for the Greater Mekong Railway Association (GMRA).
- Funded through the People's Republic of China Regional Cooperation and Poverty Reduction Fund (PRCF).
- September 2020 to December 2022 (extended).
- Working group is represented by rail officials of member countries.
- Current chair is Thailand.

The Outputs

Output No.	Output name
1	Preferred organization structure of the Greater Mekong Railway Association
1A^b	Framework Agreement (FA) for the Cross Border Railway Transport Connectivity Agreement (CBRTA)
2	Operational Readiness Plan finalized
3	GMS railway network development strategy updated
4	GMS transport demand model updated
5	Bankable railway projects identified

- Today's focus is an update on Outputs 1 and 1A.

Output 1 - Preferred Organizational Structure of the GMRA

- Current status - non legal, intergovernmental org
- Established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2014 with ADB serving as the Secretariat.
- Envisaged that by 2016, the Secretariat would be assigned to a country with the involvement of other member countries. The plan is for ADB to step back. This has not yet happened.
- The GMRA Working Group together with the TA consulting team is in discussion to find a viable form of a Secretariat with greater involvement of the countries, as well as agreeing on a timetable to establish the GMRA as a legal, intergovernmental organization.
- Sustainable funding is a key challenge as is a timetable for establishing a legal intergovernmental organization.

Output 1A - Framework Agreement for Railway Transport Connectivity (FA-CBRTC)

To implement the FA-CBRTC without delay, the following tasks remain:

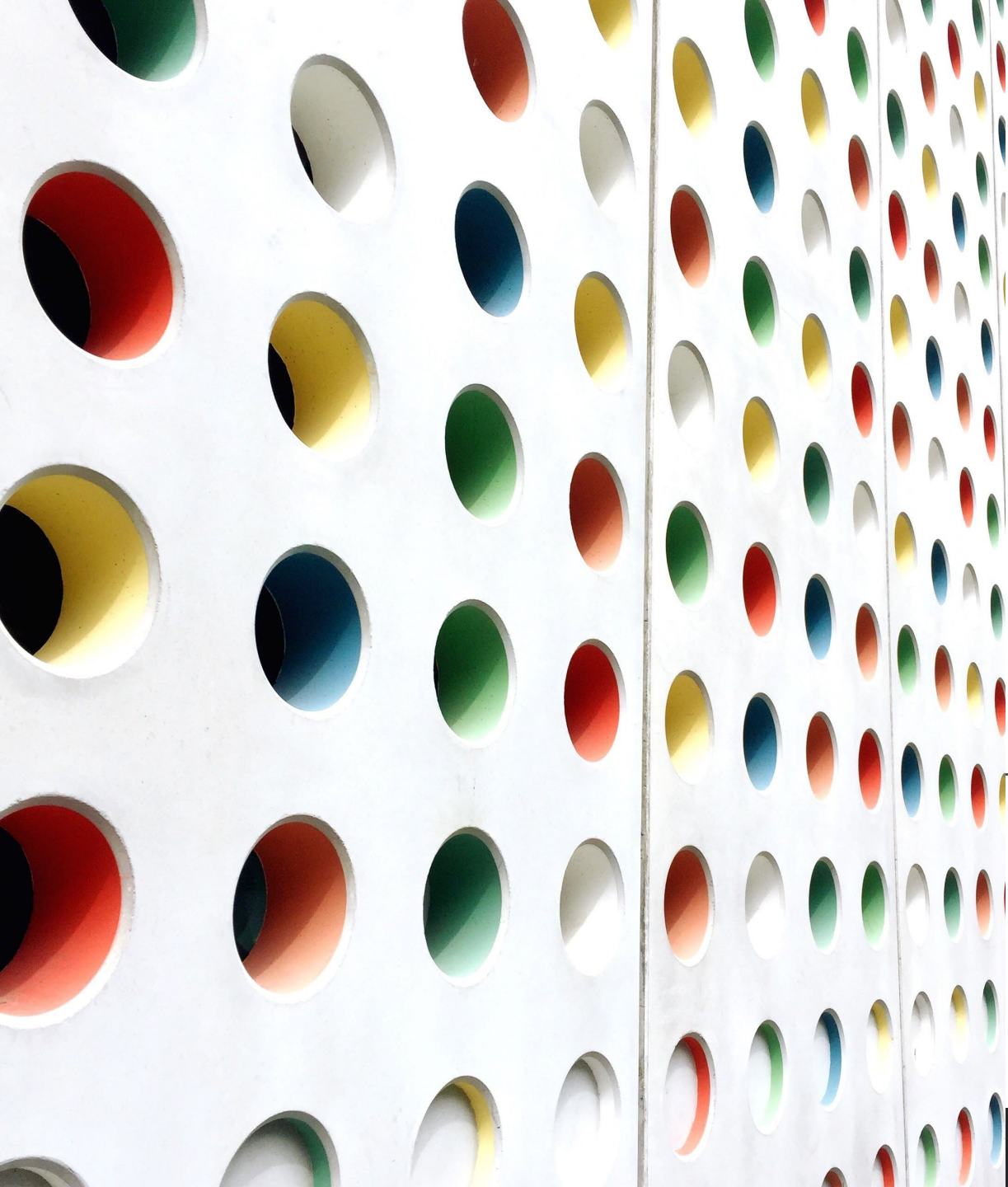
- Completion and ratification of the Framework Agreement by all GMS Governments and their relevant authorities (beyond railway and transport).
- Negotiating and drafting the priority Annexes, a process that is estimated to require at least two years of continuous negotiations.
- Addressing supporting infrastructure and technology needs to support efficient cross-border railway movements.
- A formal, legal, international GMRA that would take several years to bring to fruition but much can be done before this occurs.

Output 1A - Framework Agreement for Railway Transport Connectivity (FA-CBRTC)

- To ensure that a fully implementable FA-CBRTC is available to support the new cross-border railway operations two potential directions have been identified:
- The establishment of a Secretariat and are currently considering some models for structure and funding.
- The objective is to provide for an interim institutional mechanism prior to the establishment of a formal GMRA, which would assist to finalize the Annexes to the Framework Agreement, overlapping with the ratification period of the Framework Agreement for Cross-Border Railway Transport Connectivity, including other relevant agencies (i.e., immigration, commerce/trade, customs, quarantine, health, agriculture, etc.).
- ADB and the GMS countries could provide appropriate support.

Output 1A - Framework Agreement for Railway Transport Connectivity (FA-CBRTC)

- Given the current situation in the region, it would appear desirable to permit GMRA Countries to sign the Framework Agreement in a step-wise fashion, according to their readiness and capacity. This would allow a number of GMRA Countries to complete the negotiation of the outstanding provisions of the Framework Agreement for Cross-Border Railway Transport Connectivity move ahead with the respective processes of domestic ratification without delay.
- Comment on the desirability of these directions by the GMS leaders is invited.



Thank you!
