



**Greater Mekong Subregion
Statement of the Seventh Meeting of the Joint Committee
for the Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement**

Preamble

We, the members of the Joint Committee for the Agreement between and among the Governments of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam for Facilitation of the Cross-Border Transport of Goods and People in the Greater Mekong Subregion (referred to as the "CBTA"), met in Siem Reap, Cambodia, for the Seventh meeting of the Joint Committee on 13 March 2019. We were pleased to be joined in our discussions by staff of the Asian Development Bank.

Recognizing that the reduction of non-physical barriers to transport and trade is key to increasing the benefits of improved connectivity in and between our countries, boosting trade, tourism, and investment, increasing competitiveness and improving living standards by cutting costs, we continue to work towards increased transport and trade facilitation (TTF) throughout the Subregion, in line with the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint 2025 and investment needs identified in the GMS Regional Investment Framework.

Implementation of the CBTA

We are pleased to note the effective launch of 'Early Harvest' operations, based on the Memorandum of Understanding on the 'Early Harvest' Implementation of the CBTA, in Cambodia, Lao PDR, the People's Republic of China, Thailand and Vietnam.

Some countries have issued 'Early Harvest' Permits and Temporary Admission Documents (TADs) to international transport operators, allowing for commercial vehicles (buses and trucks) in receipt of these Permits and Temporary Admission Documents to start cross-border 'Early Harvest' transport operations; others are preparing to do so.

We tasked our Senior Officials as members of National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) to expedite the 'Early Harvest' Permit and TAD issuance process, and to actively monitor their use, address operational issues and bottlenecks as may occur, and report twice-yearly to the Joint Committee on the progress and outcomes of these actions, supported by staff from the Mekong Institute and ADB.

Recalling our earlier decisions on the MoU on the 'Early Harvest' Implementation of the CBTA, we further agreed that:

- (i) The validity of the MoU on 'Early Harvest' Implementation of the CBTA shall be extended for an additional 2 years i.e. until 31 May 2021.
- (ii) GMS members as signatories to the MoU may now issue and/or extend Permits and TADs previously issued up to this 31 May 2021 date.
- (iii) Myanmar shall join the 'Early Harvest' CBTA implementation through Initial Implementation of the CBTA (IICBTA) agreements with neighboring countries, during a grace period extended until 1 June 2021.

Operationalizing the exchange of commercial traffic rights (for both vehicles and containers) along the CBTA route network on a subregional basis is a significant milestone towards full implementation of the CBTA. In view of this fact, we again reiterated our decision on the need for a parallel process of CBTA updating, including effective arrangements for Customs Transit, and tasked our NTFC Senior Officials to commence their deliberation on these matters, and report on progress achieved at the subsequent meetings of the CBTA Joint Committee.

Expansion of Protocol 1 of the CBTA (Routes and Border Crossings)

We are pleased to announce the successful conclusion of negotiations for the extension of corridors, routes and border crossings (the route network along which GMS Road Transport Permit bearing vehicles may operate) under CBTA Protocol 1.

The outcomes of these negotiations are reflected in a final draft Memorandum of Understanding on the Opening of Additional Routes and Border Crossings under Protocol 1 of the CBTA, and revised List of List of Corridors, Routes and Border Crossings, attached to the MoU. Pursuant to the completion of domestic processes, this Memorandum of Understanding shall be signed with a view to its operationalization by 1 June 2019, with the route network available for "Early Harvest" operations.

Status and treatment of IICBTAs

We welcomed the signature, on the occasion of our Seventh CBTA Joint Committee meeting, of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Initial Implementation of the CBTA at Myawady, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and Mae Sot, Kingdom of Thailand. We look forward to the launch of negotiations and signature of IICBTAs between Myanmar and Lao PDR and Myanmar and PRC in 2019 and 2020, so as to enhance Myanmar's readiness to join the MoU on the 'Early Harvest' Implementation of the CBTA in June 2021.

In order to align the timetable for the phase out of IICBTAs with that of the CBTA 'Early Harvest', we agreed to adjust the deadline for this, as required, to 31 May 2021.

Monitoring and evaluation

We noted the initial Monitoring and Evaluation report by the Mekong Institute on the implementation of the 'Early Harvest' and look forward to receiving a further monitoring report (including the number, type and duration of journeys undertaken, perceived 'Early Harvest' benefits and ongoing bottlenecks), in June 2019.

We reiterated the importance of TTF monitoring mechanisms to facilitate informed decision-making processes, and urged the Senior Officials of the NTFCs to implement previous commitments with respect to data collection at the border crossings listed in Protocol 1 and subsequent extensions.

Acknowledgments

We expressed our appreciation to Cambodia for its chairmanship of the Seventh Joint Committee and related meetings, for the warm hospitality extended and excellent arrangements made. We further acknowledged the support of ADB in serving as Secretariat to the CBTA Joint Committee, and facilitating implementation of the MoU on the CBTA 'Early Harvest', the CBTA updating process, and accompanying actions, with support from the Government of Australia.

Endorsement

This Statement of the Seventh meeting of the Joint Committee for the Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement was endorsed in Siem Reap on 13 March 2019 by members of the Joint Committee,

- (i) H.E. Sun Chanthol, Senior Minister, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Royal Government of Cambodia
- (ii) Mr. Xu Yahua, Director General of Transportation Service Department, Ministry of Transport, Government of the People's Republic of China
- (iii) H.E. Math Sounmala, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic
- (iv) H.E. Thant Sin Maung, Union Minister, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
- (v) H.E. Teerapong Rodprasert, Vice Minister for Transport, Ministry of Transport, Government of the Kingdom of Thailand
- (vi) H.E. Nguyen Nhat, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Transport, Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam