Greater Mekong Subregion
Eighth Meeting of the Subregional Telecommunications Forum (STCF-8)
Bangkok, Thailand, 29- 30 May 2007

Summary of Proceedings

Introduction

1.   The Eighth Meeting of the Subregional Telecommunications Forum (STCF-8) held in Bangkok, Thailand, was co-organized by the Thailand Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The STCF-8 meeting's objectives were: (i) to define the future scope of GMS cooperation for telecommunications development through, among others, the preparation and Implementation of the GMS telecommunications development strategy and plan of action; (ii) to determine the proper organizational arrangements or structure for continuing the coordination of telecommunications sector initiatives, including clarifying the future role of STCF; and (iii) to enhance the effectiveness of development partners' assistance in promoting telecommunications development within the GMS. Attached, as Appendix 1, is the Agenda and Program of the Meeting.

2.   The participants included delegations from the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. There were no participants from the Union of Myanmar. Representatives from the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), UNESCAP and ADB also attended. The list of participants is attached as Appendix 2. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang, Principal Adviser for Communications, MICT, Thailand, and Mr. Anthony Jude, Principal Energy Specialist, Infrastructure Division (SEID), Southeast Asia Department, ADB.

Session I- Opening Session

3.   Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang welcomed the participants and was pleased to note the presence of old friends in the STCF. She noted the progress in GMS telecoms cooperation covering telecoms backbone development, policy/ regulatory reform, capacity building and GMS Information Superhighway (ISN) construction, and highlighted their benefits. She thanked the development partners for their role in promoting telecoms sector development in the subregion. She stressed that the commitment of financial resources for the sector's development by the GMS countries and the partners, would help build and improve the GMS telecoms network that would be critical in the socio-economic development of the subregion. She wished productive discussions for the meeting and invited everyone to enjoy the sights of Bangkok.

4.   Mr. Anthony Jude welcomed the participants and thanked the MICT for the hospitality and excellent meeting arrangements. He briefed on the agenda of the STCF-8, which would follow up on the last meeting's agreements and take up the recommendations of the Mid-Term Review of the GMS Strategy (MTR) pertaining to telecoms cooperation, in preparation for the forthcoming GMS Ministerial Conference in Manila on 19-21 June 2007. He noted that there would be discussions of the progress and next steps of the GMS Information Superhighway Network (ISN) and the telecoms backbone; the rest of the sessions, he informed, would look at

GMS experiences in policy reform and ICT development and the way forward in capacity building. He added that the MTR of the GMS Strategy proposed the formulation of a sector plan and strategy, for which an Action Plan detailing priority projects/ activities for 2008-2012, would be considered. He reiterated that as ADB assistance to the sector winds down, the focus would be in helping in the transition to sustainable institutional arrangements for cooperation in the sector. He challenged the participants to set the clear path towards realizing a modern, interconnected GMS telecoms network.

Session II- The GMS Information Superhighway Network (ISN)

Report of Steering Group (SG) on ISN (Chair: Lao PDR)

5.   Ms. Chirapa briefed on the 2nd ISN-SG meeting held in Bangkok on 30 November- 1 December 2006 (report is attached as Annex 3). This meeting discussed the report of the 4th meeting of the Implementation Group (IG), which suggested that the GMS governments provide financial assistance to the ISN construction and support promotion of ICT for development. The meeting also took up the progress of the ASEAN-China Information Superhighway project. She provided the status of the various bilateral and cross-border connections and their target completion dates. Outstanding issues on the GMS ISN were discussed covering bilateral network connections, timing and ICT applications, among others. She presented the work plan covering network management (pricing) and procurement issues, among others, and informed of the next SG meeting scheduled to be held in Lao PDR by end of 2007.

6.   Thailand (Mr. Doy) stressed that ISN development not only helps in socio-economic development of the GMS, it also promotes sustainable development and proposed that telecoms be dealt with in a multi-disciplinary forum. Lao PDR (Mr. Syyang) invited the participants to the forthcoming meetings in Vientiane: the 3rd SG meeting (end of 2007); and the 5th IG meeting (June 2007) that will discuss the budget for implementing the work plan. APT (Mr. Narayan) proposed a system for coordination between development partners and GMS countries in developing the ISN. PRC (Mr. Wang) suggested increased involvement of development partners in SG and IG activities. ADB (Mr. Jude) stressed that ADB could play only support role in telecoms and suggested the countries to identify their needs which the partners could consider supporting. He proposed that the countries study closely the possibility of the SG/IG taking over the STCF's role.

Session III- Status of the GMS Telecommunications Backbone Project

7.   ***Key National/ other developments on ISN Construction/ Development***. Mr. Somlith Phouthonesy, MCTPC, Lao PDR, briefed on the characteristics, status and progress of Lao PDR's telecoms/ ICT network development. He discussed Lao PDR's national policy and regulations, focusing on the telecoms sector policy framework and its objectives. He provided an update on the progress of reorganization of the telecoms and ICT regulator, and discussed the market structure, licensing process, and spectrum management of the sector.

8.   ***Discussions***. Mr. Jude introduced Mr Hajela as the consultant ADB has engaged to draw up the road map for future telecoms cooperation in the GMS; Mr. Hajela would be consulting the countries shortly on the content and directions of his report. Thailand (Mr. Doy) suggested tapping telecoms networks for disaster management and resource mobilization. APT and ITU representatives briefed on their respective organizations' experiences in this area.

9.   ***Updates: Telecoms Backbone Development- Lao PDR.*** Mr. Syyang Chetoi, Director, ETL, Lao PDR, briefed on the current telecoms development in Lao PDR (overall sector characteristics, operators, capacities). He discussed the national fiber optic cable (OFC) routes in relation to Lao PDR's master plan for international telecommunication network development and concluded with his general observations on telecoms services in Lao PDR. He clarified that funding for the OFC network in Lao PDR is from external loans (including equipment loan) and domestic resources.

10.   ***Overview of PRC Financial Assistance to the GMS ISN***. Mr. Wang Jianchao, Director, MII, PRC, briefed on the history of GMS ISN cooperation and focused on the financial support that PRC has provided to build the GMS ISN. He discussed the progress of consultations and financial agreements of PRC with the ICT regulators and companies of Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar, which he stressed, are designed to meet the capital demands of the network in these countries. He noted that the capital requirements for all sections of the GMS ISN have been basically met.

11.   ***Proposed suggestion to celebrate the completion of the ISN at the 3rd GMS Summit***. Mr. Wang (PRC) proposed that if the optical network of the program is completed by March 2008 as scheduled, an inauguration ceremony for the completion of Phase I of GMS ISN may be held at the Third GMS Summit.

12.   ***Discussions***. The meeting agreed on the proposal for an inauguration ceremony marking the completion of the Phase I of GMS ISN at the Third GMS Summit. Viet Nam (Ms. Ha) suggested however to make sure that all portions of Phase I of the ISN are completed prior to holding the inauguration ceremony. Mr. Jude asked the participants if the 1st phase ISN would be completed and the participants from Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR indicated that most of the ISN components would be completed in 2007, with some links to be completed in 2008, and reiterated their support to holding the inauguration ceremony. Mr. Jude noted the role of the IG in determining the technical issues of the network connections as well as in determining their capacity building needs. He stressed the need for GMS countries to request assistance if needed, from the ADB to continue support to the GMS telecoms/ ICT sector either in capacity building or investment of phase 2 of ISN.

13.   On the cross-border ISN connections, Ms. Chirapa clarified that these would be mostly completed by end of 2007. Mr. Doy said that the challenge now would be in content development and application, which he said should be done in parallel with the infrastructure portion. He asked for ADB support for this phase of ISN development. Mr. Wang said PRC supported the promotion of ICT particularly for poverty reduction, rural development and service expansion. The meeting noted the success of Lao PDR in accomplishing their backbone telecoms network and the ISN corridor using domestic resources. It also noted the high growth in the mobile subscriber base of Lao PDR, and the decline of fixed lines due to their cost structure.

Session IV- Telecommunications Policy and Regulatory Reform Program: The Case of Cambodia

14.   ***Updates: Telecoms Backbone Development and Policy/ Regulatory Reform- Cambodia***. H.E. Meas Po, DG, MPTC, provided an overview of the MPTC organization, the

status of telephone and internet users, and the progress of the telecoms backbone. He then discussed the progress of telecoms policy and regulatory reform and the assistance being provided by development partners for various telecoms projects. He noted the future plans for the sector which include expanding services (especially to rural areas), opening the telecoms business to investors, promoting ICT and putting in place regulations to manage the ICT sector.

15.   ***Discussions***. These focused on the proper separation of functions between telecoms regulators and operators, which should be considered in the sector reform program. There were discussions also on the status of telecoms backbone construction and their consistency with the timetables for Lao PDR and Myanmar.

Session V- Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Viet Nam's and PRC's Experience in Rural ICT Development for Poverty Reduction

16.   ***Overview of Viet Nam's ICT Regulatory and Rural ICT Development Experience***. Mrs. Tran Thanh Ha, Officer, DIC, MPT of Viet Nam, gave the profile of the telecoms sector in Viet Nam, and described the market players and legal framework for the sector. She presented the functions of the MPT, its policies and regulatory measures, and development plans for the telecoms and IT sector. She then briefed on Viet Nam's experience in promoting universal service (USO), highlighting the current status, targets, and future plans. She also mentioned the charges of 3% to 5% of total revenues from mobile and fixed line operators to the USO fund. She presented the initiatives for promoting ICT in rural, remote areas and briefed on the history, functions, scope, and funding of the Viet Nam Public Utility Telecommunication Service Fund (VTF), which amounts to $325 million through 2010.

17.   ***Discussions***. Ms. Chirapa noted that a fund similar to VTF exists in Thailand. Mr. Doy asked to what extent university research outputs are applied in Viet Nam's telecoms industry. Mrs. Ha discussed the processes involved in the use of applied technology in Viet Nam. Clarifications were requested on the basis and structure of tariffs, and whether there is cross-subsidy across service types. Dr. Kim (ITU) asked about extent of competition in the sector, the basis for target mobile penetration rates, and the experience with WIMAX. Mrs. Ha stressed the role of competition to foster growth of industry and noted that the country's geography and habits of consumers determine the target rates set; she also provided information on the WIMAX trial in Viet Nam.

18.   ***Overview of Chinese experience in Rural ICT development***. Mr. Shen Yongtao, TAB, MII, PRC, provided the background, phases and objectives of rural telecom development in the PRC. He discussed the purpose, policy and investment components in the implementation of the Village Access (VA) project as well as the distribution of tasks and technology applied (e.g. SCDMA) in its implementation. He summarized the achievements of the VA project and how rural ICT helped the villager. He proposed cooperation to address the problem of the digital divide in the GMS, and noted that the rural telecoms market needs assistance, given its high cost and low revenue, but possibly high latent demand.

19.   ***Discussions***. Ms. Chirapa related Thailand's experience and policy to promote USO, and stressed the need to look into involving the private sector for different models of USO development. Mr. Doy discussed the various ways in which ICT could be used for alleviating poverty and for reducing pollution (e.g. lessen need to commute to work). The meeting noted that PRC accomplished its USO without having a fund in place, but with central government

providing subsidies in the order of $53 million, and favorable tax relief granted by the provinces to the operator. The meeting wondered if the PRC experience could be replicated for the other GMS countries.

Session VI- Capacity Building in Telecommunications: The Way Forward

20.   ***Review of accomplishments in Training in Telecommunications/ ICT***. Ms. Hu Yue, MII, PRC, briefed on the three telecoms training programs sponsored by the PRC with ADB support, which covered the following: fixed communication network; mobile communications network; and rural communications. She discussed the overall outcome of these programs (in terms of number of trained persons, total training hours, etc.) and the beneficial results of these programs. She proposed the conduct of a fourth program, with possible ADB assistance covering optic fiber networks, in preparation for the completion of the GMS ISN.

21.   ***Discussions***. The meeting took up the possibility of the GMS countries developing a structured training program together with the development partners, to ensure greater buy-in of partners into the program. Mr. Jude said this could also facilitate securing funding support from ADB and other partners.

Session VII- The Road Map for GMS Telecommunications Cooperation

22.   ***Views of Development Partners: ITU***. Ms. Eun-Ju Kim, Regional Representative, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, briefed on the ITU's main functions, its development programs and initiatives, and its Asia Pacific Regional Initiatives, i.e., Telecoms/ ICT policy and regulatory cooperation, rural communications, next generation networks (NGNs), etc. She discussed the ITU's key activities for each GMS country and pointed out ITU's roles for the proposed cooperation road map for the GMS in the following areas: policy/ regulatory reform, ISN/ telecoms backbone, ICT development and capacity building. For the latter, she informed of the Asia Pacific Centers of Excellence (CoEs) to be set up. Ms. Kim then outlined the proposed partnership with ADB for the development of telecoms/ ICT in the GMS and showed the ITU's Asia Pacific events/ activities for 2007.

23.   ***Discussions***. Thailand (Mr. Doy) emphasized the importance of building the knowledge base through ICT but cautioned on its potential harmful effects on society. Ms. Kim noted that while ITU supports seminars, its main outputs include research that could form the basis of standards for the guidance of sector operators. She added that ITU has a team that addresses some of ICT's potential harmful effects.

24.   ***Discussion of Institutional Arrangements and possible elements of Strategy and Action Plan***. Mr. Jude showed the arrangements for cooperation in the power sector composed of the RPTCC and its working groups. He suggested the participants to think about similar arrangements for cooperation in the telecoms sector especially in having working groups handle technical matters. He noted for example, that the training program is decided at the level of the WG under the RPTCC, and for telecoms the IG could decide on a structured training program that is country-driven. He circulated a draft Action Plan for the telecoms sector, based on the GMS Development Matrix, and asked the participants to review and submit comments on its contents. Mr. Hajela announced his proposed schedule of country consultation visits to formulate the sector development strategy and firm up the Action Plan.

25.   ***Collaboration between ADB and APT in supporting ICT activities, strengthening Regional Telecoms Regulatory efforts***. Mr. F. Parvez. Project Coordinator, APT, provided an overview of the needs of GMS countries in telecoms and ICT, particularly in addressing the digital divide between and within countries. He stressed the importance of regional cooperation and technical assistance on bilateral and multilateral basis to address these needs. He then briefed on APT, its membership, the Bangkok Agenda and strategic plan. He discussed the various success stories of APT in dealing with subregional issues in the field of ICT. He detailed APT's capacity building initiatives and other subregional initiatives. He then discussed the potential cooperation between APT and ADB in STCF such as taking collective action on issues, sharing of experiences and knowledge, promoting private investments, and facilitating network connections.

26.   ***Discussions***. The meeting noted that Cambodia only recently joined APT and would henceforth be participating actively in APT's training programs. APT (Mr. Narayan) further explained the nature of APTs programs in various regions, and how these are financed out of APT's members' contributions.

27.   ***JBIC***. Ms. Shimakage announced that JBIC's brief (mostly on ODA loans to Cambodia and Lao PDR to develop their telecoms and power networks, respectively) has been circulated earlier and welcomed questions from the participants.

Session VIII- The Strategy and Action Plan for GMS Cooperation in the Telecommunications Sector

28.   ***Review of Key Elements of cooperation, possible Action Plan***. ADB (Mr. Jude) gave a quick review of the status of the telecoms items contained in the current GMS Ministerial Plan of Action (POA) and presented the rationale for preparing a new Action Plan for telecommunications (2008-2012), to respond to new challenges identified in the MTR of the GMS Strategy and the Eminent Persons' Report (both available at the ADB website). He requested the country representatives to validate the entries in the proposed new Action Plan, particularly on the priority projects to be included and their indicative timelines, and asked them to present their comments during the discussions. STCF-8 participants supported the preparation of the new Action Plan and agreed to provide comments/ inputs to ADB. The telecoms consultant (Mr. Hajela) engaged by ADB was also requested to consult the GMS countries to further refine the content of the Action Plan. He gave his proposed schedule of country visits to ensure the availability of the persons to be met, as follows: Cambodia, 11-12 June; Lao PDR, 4-8 June; Thailand, 30 May to 3 June; Viet Nam, 13-14 June; Myanmar 16-18 June; and PRC, after 18 June. The GMS representatives agreed to consult their respective head offices on the proposed schedule.

29.   ***Presentation/ consideration of Draft Strategy and Action Plan***. Mr. Jude asked the GMS representatives to review the entries in the draft Action Plan (attached, Annex 4). Among the comments received for item 1 were:

   a. PRC: Proposed to establish a subregional committee like STCF, and under this would be the specific working groups such as the SG/ IG of ISN.
   b. Lao PDR: To separate the items on institutions and capacity building; item 1 would then become items 1 and 2; to invite more partners to support capacity building plan;

agreed to the reorganization of the STCF, incorporating SG/ IG in its structure; expressed the need for continued ADB support for the sector;

c. Thailand: Proposed undertaking in parallel, capacity building items 1b and 1c; need for training needs analysis in each country; agreed with PRC on the need for two layers, the policy making and technical levels; SG and IG should be kept separate.

d. ADB: To link with Phnom Penh Plan to address some of sector's capacity building requirements; agreed to re-study the STCF restructuring proposal and give feedback to GMS representatives by July 2007; asked the GMS representatives to clearly convey their request for continued telecoms support through their governments;

e. Viet Nam: Agreed to the proposal to review training needs and for partners to come up with an integrated program based on the needs; reiterated the need for continued ADB support for telecoms sector;

30. **_Comments on Item 2_**. The participants' views on the item on developing the strategic plan and promoting private sector participation were:

a. APT: Noted that the needs vary across countries for some items.

b. Cambodia: Proposed inclusion of some items such as tariff for roaming charges, and network security protection.

c. PRC: Noted many items should be discussed between governments due to technical policies involved; proposed setting up a telecommunications planning committee to handle technical matters; proposed combining items pertaining to advancing network technologies.

d. Lao PDR: Supported PRC position on telecoms planning committee, which could cover items 2b to 2h.

e. Thailand and Viet Nam: Agreed with Lao and PRC position.

f. Mr. Hajela: Suggested creation of Operations Planning Group composed of telecoms operators of GMS countries; PRC noted however that the IG could perform this role.

31. **_Comments on Item 3_**. The participants' views on the item on developing the ISN and telecoms backbone were:

a. ADB: To distinguish between Phase I and Phase II of ISN construction; clarified the status of certain projects in Cambodia; proposed splitting Backbone Phase II project (3f) into specific components.

b. Lao PDR: Proposed firming up the schedule of completing the ISN network connections; clarified that all construction would be in Phase I, and Phase II would involve equipment procurement and other enhancements.

c. Thailand: Noted that the next IG meeting in Vientiane would decide on how Phase II would be completed; clarified that Phase II would involve upgrading of Phase I construction.

d. Viet Nam: Noted that Phnom Penh-HCMC section upgrading would be completed by end of the year; updated on other project components.

32. **_Comments on Item 4_**. The participants' views on the item on promoting ICT were:

a. PRC: To support pilot projects on rural communications in GMS countries, with possible ADB and other partners' support.

b. Lao PDR: Requested more time for internal consultations on the items in the Action Plan; ADB asked for inputs if possible by June 10, prior to the GMS Ministerial Meeting on 21 June.

c. Thailand: Agreed to the PRC proposal on piloting, and suggested its speedy implementation; requested also more time for internal consultations.

d. Viet Nam: Supported Thailand's position.

e. Cambodia: Requested clarifications on Viet Nam's and PRC's experiences in USO/ USF promotion.

f. APT: Suggested publishing a GMS Yearbook similar to the APT Yearbook containing basic information on the status and progress of the GMS telecoms sector, and offered APT assistance on this project; ADB to consider this proposal.

Session IX- Consideration and Adoption of Summary of Proceedings/ Closing Session

33.   Mr. Jude announced the distribution of the draft summary of proceedings for review by the body. The STCF-8 participants reviewed the draft summary of proceedings and after incorporating the suggested changes, the body therefore approved the minutes of the STCF-8 meeting.

34.   *Closing Remarks*.

35.   Ms. Chirapa noted that the meeting succeeded in realizing its objectives, particularly in discussing the progress and next steps in the development of the telecoms backbone and ISN and in agreeing on the need to formulate and refine the GMS telecommunications strategy and Action Plan. She expressed confidence that constructive guidance provided by the meeting would lead to effective implementation of projects in the sector, which would ultimately redound to the benefit of the peoples of the subregion. She invited everyone to enjoy the sights of Bangkok. She thanked ADB for the support in organizing the meeting, and thanked the other development partners for their contributions to the discussions.

36.   Mr. Jude reiterated the substantive accomplishments of the meeting and summarized the major agreements on the way forward in the following areas: completing the telecoms backbone and ISN construction, promoting rural ICT, capacity building, improving coordination among development partners and formulating the telecoms sector strategy and Action Plan. He noted that the success of GMS Program arises from the strong ownership demonstrated by GMS members in all sectors of cooperation. He noted that the meeting agreed to study optimum arrangements for cooperation in the sector and reiterated that the consultant engaged by ADB would undertake country consultations shortly, and that his report will cover recommendations on the sector strategy and Action Plan as well as on optimum institutional arrangements for cooperation in the sector. He thanked the MICT of Thailand for excellent support in hosting the meeting.

Greater Mekong Subregion
Eighth Meeting of the Subregional Telecommunications Forum (STCF-8)
29–30 May 2007
Holiday Inn, Ploenchit Road, Bangkok, Thailand

Agenda and Program

Meeting Objectives:
1. To define the future scope of GMS cooperation for telecommunications development through, among others, the preparation and Implementation of the GMS telecommunications development strategy and plan of action.
2. To determine the proper organizational arrangements or structure for continuing the coordination of telecommunications sector initiatives.
3. To clarify the future role of STCF, and enhance the effectiveness of development partners in promoting telecommunications development within the GMS.

Day 1

0830 - 0900   Registration

0900 - 0930   **Session I- Opening**

Welcome and Opening Remarks by
1. Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang, Principal Adviser for Communications
   Ministry of Information and Communication Technology
2. Anthony Jude, Principal Project Specialist, Infrastructure Division
   Southeast Asia Department (SEID)
   Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Photo Session

0930- 1030   **Session II- Status of the GMS Information Superhighway Network (ISN): Report by the Steering Group (SG) on the ISN**

1. Key National and Other Developments on ISN Construction/ Development
- Representative of Lao, PRD
- Discussions

1030-1045   **Coffee Break**

1045- 1215   **Session III- Status of the GMS Telecommunications Backbone Project**

1. Overview of the Financial Assistance provided to the GMS ISN.
- Representative of PRC
- Discussions

2. Proposed suggestion to celebrate the completion of GMS ISN at the 3rd GMS Summit Meeting in 2008.
- Representative of PRC
- Discussions

3. Updates: Telecommunications Backbone Development- Cambodia

- Representative of Cambodia to discuss progress of JBIC's assistance and World Bank's assistance on rural ICT.
- Discussions
4. Updates: Telecommunications Backbone Development- Lao, PDR
- Representative of Lao PDR
- Discussions

5. Updates: Telecommunications Backbone Development- Myanmar
- Representative of Myanmar
- Discussions

1215- 1400   **Lunch Break**

1400- 1440   **Session IV- Telecommunications Policy and Regulatory Reform Program: The Case of Cambodia**

Provide an overview on the progress in implementing the sector policy and regulatory reforms of the sector. Update ongoing ADB TA on sector reforms including plans to establish Telecoms Regulator and privatization of Telecoms of Cambodia.
- Representative of Cambodia
- Discussions

1440- 1530   **Session V- Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Viet Nam's Experience in Rural ICT Development for Poverty Reduction**

1. Provide an overview on sector restructuring, establishment of a telecoms regulator and the role of regulator. How universal service obligations are being met and lessons learned from rural ICT development
- Representative of Viet Nam
- Discussions

2. An overview of Chinese experience in rural ICT development representation of PRC
– Discussions

1545- 1600   **Coffee Break**

1600- 1645   **Session VI- Capacity Building in Telecommunications: The Way Forward**

1. Review of accomplishments in Training in Telecommunications/ICT
- Representative of PRC

2. Presentation of Proposals for Strengthening Capacity Building Efforts within the GMS
- Discussions

1645- 1745   **Session VII- The Road Map for GMS Telecommunications Cooperation**

1. Review of Emerging Key Elements of Cooperation in the Sector; Review of Possible Institutional Arrangements for Cooperation
- ADB Representative
- Discussions on Possible Elements of the Strategy and Action Plan

2. Views of Development Partners (JBIC, ITU, ESCAP and WB)

3. Collaborate between APT and ADB in supporting ICT Activities and Strengthening Regional Telecoms Regulatory Efforts.
   - APT/ADB

Dinner hosted by MICT Thailand (Venue to be announced)

Day 2

0900- 1030 **Session VIII- The Strategy and Action Plan for GMS Cooperation in the Telecommunications Sector**

1. Presentation and Consideration of the Draft Strategy and Action Plan.
   - ADB
   - Discussions (Including Views of Development Partners)

2. Adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan

1100 - 1130 **Coffee Break**

1130 -1215 **Session VI- Consideration and Adoption of Summary of Proceedings/ Closing Session**

1. Other Matters (Discussion on Establishment of Successor Body to STCF, Other Key Issues)

2. Key STCF Points/ Adoption of Summary of Proceedings
   - Chairperson/ Co-Chairperson

3. Closing Remarks by
   i. Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang, Head of Delegation, Thailand
   ii. Anthony Jude, ADB

1215-130 **Lunch**

Dinner hosted by ADB

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Greater Mekong Sub-region Information Superhighway
2nd Steering Group Meeting

Meeting Minutes

November 30 – December 1, 2006

· Bangkok, Thailand

Introduction

1. The Second Greater Mekong Subregion Information Superhighway Steering Group Meeting (GMS IS-SG) is held in Bangkok, Thailand on November 30 – December 1, 2006. The Meeting was co-organized by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand and CAT Telecom.

2. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang, Principal Adviser for Communications, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Thailand.

3. The participants comprised delegations from the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The list of participants was attached as **Annex I**.

I   Opening Session

4. Ms.Chirapa Chitraswang warmly welcomed the participants to the meeting on behalf of the Royal Thai Government. She said that the active participation of the GMS countries have contributed to substantial achievements in planning and construction of Greater Mekong Subregion Information Superhighway.
The Opening Remark was attached as **Annex II**.

II   Adoption of Agenda

5. The SG meeting adopted the Agenda as follows:
   - i.   Opening Session
   - ii.   Adoption of Agenda
   - iii.   Business Arrangements
   - iv.   Consideration of the Report of the 4th IG Meeting of GMS IS
     - Updating on the Progress of GMS IS by IG Chairperson
     - Evaluation and Endorsement of IG Report
   - v.   Country Presentation: Authority's Support for GMS IS by each member country
   - vi.   Information on ASEAN-China Information Superhighway Project
   - vii. Outstanding Issues on GMS ISN
   - viii. Other Business
     - Update the SG Member List
     - Other issues
   - ix.   The 3rd Steering Group Meeting

x.   Consideration and Adoption of the Meeting Report to the GMS Governments
xi.   Discussion and Adoption of Meeting Minutes
and
xii. Closing Session

Adopted Agenda was attached as **Annex III**.

III   Business Arrangements

6.   The Meeting was held at CAT Telecom Tower, Bangrak, Bangkok. Program of the Meeting was attached as **Annex IV**.

IV   Consideration of the 4th IG Meeting of GMS IS

7.   Mr. Tanin Youkhaw, Vice President, Marketing Planning Department, CAT Telecom, the Chairperson of the 4th Implementation Group Meeting, presented the report of the fourth GMS IS IG.   IGC report and presentation were attached as **Annex V and VI** respectively.

8.   The meeting endorsed the 4th IG Report in particular the suggestions as followed

- The communication authorities of all countries should actively follow this project and render necessary policy support for it. It is hoped that the relevant authorities should provide proper guidance and coordination during the construction of transnational projects in particular.
- For projects with large investment and insufficient fund from operating businesses, it is hoped that the governments can provide or help seek necessary financial assistance. The establishment of financial assistance plans among the governments should also be considered.
- Further promotion of ICT applications usage should extremely be encouraged by each party's authority so that it helps increase the use of the GMS ISN infrastructure.

V.   Country Presentation: Authority's Support for GMS IS

Cambodia

9.   H.E. Mr. Ty John, Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Post and Telecommunication (MPTC) of Cambodia, stated that the status of Cambodia's GMS IS has remained unchanged relating to the fiber optic construction projects since the first SG meeting but the soft loan from China will make the good progress for the project above. Also MPTC, as well as the government of Cambodia, will fully support to GMS IS project and will cooperate with member countries.

China

10.   Mr. Qian Tingshou Deputy Director General, Department of Planning, Ministry of Information Industry (MII), PRC, expressed that MII has been strengthening the coordination with its related authorities to gain support in order to speed up the implementation of the GMS IS Project.

11.   Furthermore, he also expressed that all member parties should further deepen our cooperation to guarantee the network interconnection, operation and maintenance in this region, to improve the management level of the Information Superhighway, and to tap maximum benefits from it. PRC presentation was attached as **Annex VII**.

Lao PDR
12.   Mr. Somlith Phouthonesy, Deputy Director General, Department of Post and Telecommunications, Ministry of Communication, Transport, Post and Construction (MCTPC), specified that the government of Lao PDR is fully supportive of the GMS IS project and will actively cooperate with the member parties. Lao PDR presentation was attached as **Annex VIII**.

Myanmar
13.   Mr. Htun Aung, Chief Engineer, Myanma Posts and Telecommunications (MPT), stated that the Union of Myanmar is fully aware of the need to bridge the Digital Divide; recent ICT indicators and HRD efforts reflect this awareness. Fiber Optic Links are deployed for Broadband usage. Incessant upgrades to increase capacity are necessary, but in order to achieve the goals set, more funding and meaningful assistance programs are needed. Myanmar presentation was attached as **Annex IX**.

Vietnam
14.   Mr. Nguyen Xuan Tru, Deputy Director, Department of telecommunication, Ministry of Posts and Telematics (MPT), highlighted the progress and development of the telecommunications industry in Viet Nam and MPT's supporting activities in GMS project. Vietnam presentation was attached as **Annex X**.

Thailand
15.   Mr. Thanis Songkrant, Policy and Planning Analyst, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, stated that Thailand has fully supported activities and co-operations with CAT Telecom in building Telecommunications infrastructure across border, which is the installation of the Optic Fiber to border provinces according to the GMS IS project. Thailand presentation was attached as **Annex XI**.

VI.   Information on ASEAN-China Information Superhighway

16.   Ms. Anotai Srikitja, Head of IT Securities Business Development Division, Data Com Business Department, CAT Telecom, updated information regarding China-ASEAN Information Superhighway Project which intends to expand the GMS Information Superhighway project to cover all ASEAN countries.

17.   The implementation of the GMS Information Superhighway Project will endeavor to make the infrastructure building basically completed and service available by 2008 and the network for full development and operation of services by 2010. The China-ASEAN Information Superhighway presentation was attached as **Annex XII**.

18.   Chinese representative added that Premier Wen Jiabao initiated China-ASEAN Information Superhighway Project which later received positive response from ASEAN member countries.

19.   The meeting took note information on China-ASEAN IS project presented by the representatives from Thailand and China respectively.

VII.   Outstanding Issues on GMS ISN
20.   The meeting considered and discussed outstanding issues on GMS ISN as follows:

a) Bilateral connection
- Cambodia
    - Existing Cross-border with Thailand and Vietnam to be upgraded in 2007
    - Domestic route and cross-border with Laos to finish by mid-2008
- China
    - Fiber construction to Myanmar border completed in 2005.
    - Connection with Laos completed in 2006
- Laos .
    - Cross-border connections were finished with China in 2006, and with Vietnam and Thailand in 1999
    - Planning border connection with Cambodia by mid-2008 and Myanmar in appropriate time*
- Myanmar
    - Cross-border connections to finish by 2007
- Thailand
    - Cross-border routes to finish by 2007
- Vietnam
    - With China and Laos are completed
    - With Cambodia to upgrade to 2.5G by 2007

b) Time schedule for phase I
- Phase I (Cross-border connections) to be ready for service by 2008 (According to GMS ISN's MoU)
- Cambodia (MPTC) to finish by mid-2008
- China (CT) to Laos can be upgraded to 2.5G by 2008
- Laos (ETL) to start with Cambodia and Myanmar* in 2007, and to upgrade the connection with China to 2.5G in 2008
- Myanmar (MPT) to finish by 2007
- Thailand (CAT) to finish by 2007
- Vietnam (VNPT) to finish by 2007

    * Laos-Myanmar to be added to network configuration awaiting proposal for consideration.

c) Issues under discussion
- Co-bidding of equipment procurement between neighboring parties
    - Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand prefer individual bidding with cooperation of mutual equipment spec prior to each individual procurement
    - In order to expedite the connection, Myanmar proposed that the earlier party shall consider to provide the terminal for the link across the border
    - Further study to be discussed in the next IG meeting
- Laos will provide Myanmar location of cross-border connection

- Active participation of every party in IG and SG meetings including necessary information provided
- SG's support to push forward the progress of the project to meet time schedule
- ICT applications support from SG and governments to promote GMS ISN usage
- Funding: Financial assistance for GMS ISN required

d) Work Plan in 2007
- Majority of cross-border connections to complete by 2007
- IG-5 to be hosted and chaired by Laos (ETL) in May 2007, to set target completion date, and discuss Network Management (Pricing) issues, and equipment procurement issues
- SG-3 to be hosted and chaired by Laos by the end of 2007.

21.   The chairperson asked each country to review the presentation and advised if there are some changes. After incorporation of suggested changes, the body therefore approved the outstanding issues on GMS ISN.

22.   The presentation of outstanding issues on GMS ISN was attached as **Annex XIII**.

VIII.   Other Businesses
23.   The Chairperson requested the SG participants to update the SG member list by submitting the list to the secretariat. The revised list was appeared in **Annex XIV**.

24.   The meeting took note presentation of the representative of Telecommunication Planning Research Institute (TPRI) on the reviews of Study on Network Planning for Building Greater Mekong Subregional Information Superhighway. The presentation was appeared in **Annex XV**.

IX.   The 3rd Steering Group Meeting
25.   Lao PDR (MCTPC) will host and chair the 3rd Steering Group Meeting by the end of 2007. The venue and date of the meeting will be informed in due course.

X   Consideration and Adoption of the Meeting Report to the GMS Governments
26.   The GMS IS SG considered and adopted the minutes of the 2nd GMS IS SG meeting.

27.   The meeting also adopted the report on 2nd SG discussion for submitting to each GMS Governments as attached in **Annex XVI**.

XI   Closing Session
28.   Ms. Chirapa stated that the meeting has concluded successfully and that it has provided a good opportunity for exchange of views and experiences in GMS IS cooperation. She said it is time to transform the agreements in this meeting into actual activities to promote economic cooperation among GMS countries.

29.   She said that the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology is honored to host the meeting and thanked the GMS representatives for the successful conduct of the meeting.

For and on behalf of

Ministry of Communications, Posts and Telegraphs of the Union of Myanmar

By:_____

(Mr.Maung Maung Tin)

For and on behalf of

Ministry of Posts and Telematics of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
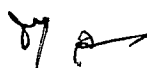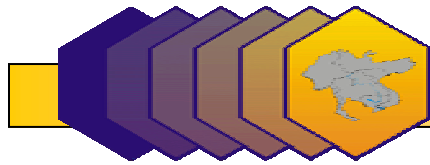
By:_____

(Mr. Nguyen Xuan Tru)

For and on behalf of

Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of the Kingdom of Thailand

By:_____

(Ms. Chirapa Chitraswang)

Greater Mekong Subregion

ACTION PLAN

	Priority Projects/ Activities	Indicative Timeline	Countries Involved	Remarks
	TELECOMMUNICATIONS			
1.	**Establishment of sustainable mechanisms for cooperation and building capacity in the telecommunications sector**			
	a. Re-organizing the Subregional Telecoms Forum (STCF) to coordinate cooperation in the Sector/ Consider STCF Replacement by the Steering Group (SG)/ SG to be merged with Implementation Group (IG) of the Information Superhighway Network (ISN)	2007-2008	GMS Countries	Proposed in the Mid Term Review of the GMS Strategy (MTR)
	b. Capacity Building for Sustained Telecommunications Development in the GMS	2006-2010	GMS Countries	Joint training programs among development partners active in the sector
	c. Capacity Building Study	?	GMS Countries	To assess feasibility of an HRD and work force planning unit, including organizational scheme and structure
2.	**Formulation and implementation of telecoms sector development plan and strategy to enhance private sector participation in the sector**			
	a. Research for GMS Telecommunications Development	2006-2010	GMS Countries	Proposed. To set up Telecom Planning Committee to do research and formulate Telecom Development Plan

Priority Projects/ Activities	Indicative Timeline	Countries Involved	Remarks
b. Tariff Options Study	?	GMS Countries	Assess feasibility of intra-GMS call tariff regime; recommend options/ implementation plan for such schemes
c. Unified Numbering Plan and Implementation Study	?	GMS Countries	To assess technical feasibility of unified numbering plan given current and planned network technologies
d. Telecoms Management Network (TMN) Study	?	GMS Countries	To assess feasibility of common approach to dynamic traffic management within the GMS by a regional TMN
e. Subregional Network Synchronization and Implementation Study	?	GMS Countries	Focus on assessing operators' synchronization networks and their plans
f. Common Channeling Signaling System (CCS No. 7) and Implementation	?	GMS Countries	To assess feasibility of moving up to CCS No. 7 using Integrated Services User Port (ISUP)
g. Accounting and Billing Training Needs Study	?	GMS Countries	To determine the need for training, resources available and how to bridge gaps
h. Call Event Recording	?	GMS Countries	To recommend implementation plans for feasible common approaches

Priority Projects/ Activities	Indicative Timeline	Countries Involved	Remarks
3. Completion of the GMS Information Superhighway Network (ISN) and Telecoms Backbone			
a. GMS ISN Construction	2006-2010	GMS Countries	Ongoing. Steering Group (SG) and Implementation Group (IG) on ISN operational
b. GMS ISN Technical Assistance Support	2006-2010	GMS Countries	Proposed. To support SG/IG meetings
c. Expansion of Telecommunications Services at Western End of Corridor	?	Myanmar	Proposed. Landline or wireless; private activity emphasized; basic network and exchanges
d. Telecoms Backbone Development: Bangkok-Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh Section	?	Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam	Proposed
e. Feasibility Study of Telecommunications Network Development	2002-2020	Cambodia	Study of options for transmission network development; high-speed info/data transfer, telephone network, service efficiency
f. Telecommunications Backbone Project Phase II	?	PRC, Myanmar, Viet Nam	Construction of: Keng Tung (MYA)-Jinghong (PRC); Hanoi (VIE)-Hekou (PRC); Yangon-Meiktila-Keng Tung (MYA) to Thai border
4. Promotion of ICT applications for development and poverty reduction in the GMS			
a. Promotion of Rural Communications Development in the GMS	2006-2010	GMS Countries	Proposed. Includes inter-country

Priority Projects/ Activities	Indicative Timeline	Countries Involved	Remarks
			exchanges of policy/ technology, rural communications model projects, capacity building for applicable techonologies
b. GMS ICT Project- Cambodia	?	Cambodia	Launch of e-government, rural ICT connectivity, software and hardware