

HA NOI PROGRAMME OF ACTION
FOR MEKONG - GANGA COOPERATION

28 July, 2001
HA NOI, VIET NAM

INTRODUCTION

The Inaugural Ministerial Meeting, held in Vientiane on 10th November 2000 adopted the Vientiane Declaration on Mekong-Ganga Cooperation which sets out a vision for cooperation with a view to developing closer relations and better understanding among the six countries, Cambodia, India, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Vientiane Declaration identifies a number of areas for cooperation, namely tourism, culture, education, and transport and communication.

In the spirit of the Vientiane Declaration, the Hanoi Programme of Action is drawn up and adopted by the Second Ministerial Meeting held in Hanoi in July 2001. This programme of action provides specific actions to be taken in the above-mentioned four areas of cooperation, namely tourism, culture, education, and transport and communication. The Hanoi Programme of Action has a six-year time frame covering the period from July 2001 to July 2007. The progress of its implementation shall be reviewed every two years in coincidence with the MGC Annual Ministerial Meeting.

The Experts Working Groups Meetings on Tourism, Transport and Communication, Human Resources Development, and Culture were convened as follows: Tourism in Bangkok on 29 May 2001, Transport and Communication in Vientiane on 7-8 June 2001, Human Resource Development in New Delhi on 11-12 June 2001, Culture in Phnom Penh on 29 June 2001. The Programmes of Action drawn up by the four Experts Working Groups on Tourism, Transport and Communication, Human Resource Development, and Culture are at Annexure I, II, III, and IV respectively. The MGC Ministers adopted these Programmes of Action and

agreed that they would constitute the initial cooperative work programme for implementation by the MGC.

1. TOURISM

Mekong-Ganga cooperation in tourism will be developed in areas such as tourism policy planning, human resource development, marketing, and environmental preservation through the strengthening of existing linkages as well as the development of new collaborative actions in the tourism sector of Member Countries. The effort will be to develop tourist destinations that combine and link more than one Member Country. Transparency in exchange of tourist information should be encouraged.

1.1 Promote awareness of the enormous cultural richness and diversity of the MGC region and its many attractive tourist destinations:

1.1.1 Organise familiarisation trips with the participation of Member Countries' officials, tourism agents, and mass media circles to study and promote the tourism potential of Member Countries.

1.1.2 Encourage cross-border tour packages, especially in long-haul markets, so that visitors can discover the rich cultural and civilisational affinity of the MGC region.

1.1.3 Hold MGC-wide cultural festivals so that visitors can experience a full spectrum of exciting cultural and traditional events across the region.

1.1.4 Develop Mekong - Ganga tourism through the establishment of Mekong - Ganga tourist booths in international tourism fairs, the publication of Mekong-Ganga Tourism Map, Mekong - Ganga travel guides and brochures multi-media promotional materials, to distribute in different areas through international events on tourism and organise workshops and seminars.

1.1.5 Encourage the development of an MGC Directory of Tourism Products and Services, in printed form and as Internet on-line information, among the tourism agencies of Member Countries, and design the logo for Mekong-Ganga Tourism Cooperation to be used by Member Countries in tourism promotional campaigns.

1.1.6 Share information on the eco-tourism promotion programs, air linkages and religious tourism circuits.

1.2 Encourage tourism investment:

1.2.1 Develop MGC distinctive tourism products so as to attract investment in the tourism sector of Member Countries.

1.2.2 Establish and develop an MGC tourism investment guide with a view to fostering transparency, among others, of the systems, procedures and regulations related to tourism investment in Member Countries so as to promote the region as an attractive area for tourism investments.

1.3 Cooperate in tourism education and training:

1.3.1 Share resources, skills and training facilities, e.g., the networking of tourism training centres/institutes, provision of technical assistance and experts, training of trainers, etc.

1.3.2 Exchange missions among Member Countries to share experience and knowledge in the development of tourism industry.

1.3.3 Share information on tourism statistical data and other related information.

1.3.4 Facilitate information access with regard to cultural and historical heritage in MGC countries and exchange information in question for publication in each Member Countries

1.4 Facilitate the travel of tourists among Member Countries:

1.4.1- Simplify tourist visa procedures and remove barriers impeding tourism growth in order to further develop tourist traffic.

1.4.2 Increase direct air links between major cities and tourism areas of the MGC region.

1.5 *Promote Eco-tourism:*

1.5.1 Develop guidelines for assessing and monitoring tourism impact on the natural environment.

1.5.2 Promote public information and awareness, especially at the local community-level, so as to educate the public and gain its acceptance of environmentally sustainable tourism.

2. CULTURE

Mekong-Ganga cooperation in culture will be aimed at preserving and promoting the shared cultural and traditional values of Member Countries so as to enhance mutual understanding.

2.1 *Promote joint research on cultural heritage of Member Countries especially dance, music and theatrical forms and traditions:*

2.1.1 Develop, disseminate, publish and share source materials on culture, which Member Countries can translate and replicate, for the teaching and learning of MGC cultures.

2.1.2 Exchange missions and experts among Member Countries for the purposes of joint research on MGC's cultural heritage.

2.2 *Undertake conservation, preservation, protection and promotion programmes to revitalize and further develop MGC's cultural heritage:*

2.2.1 Conduct surveys on heritage sites and artifacts to compile and publish a Directory on Heritage Sites and Artifacts for the MGC region.

2.2.2 Hold special events at important cultural heritage sites in the MGC region, with the participation of representatives from Member Countries and from international organisations, with a view to promoting international awareness of Member Countries' cultural heritage.

2.2.3 Make joint efforts, wherever possible, to expand export market for cultural products of Member Countries.

2.3 Promote cultural exchange among Member Countries

2.3.1 Set up networks for the exchange of information and for regular dialogue on cultural exchange among Member Countries.

2.3.2 Promote the exchange and exhibition of all performing arts, visual arts and literature, including traditional dance, music and theatre and encourage people-to-people exchange among member countries.

2.3.3 Encourage the participation of Member Countries in important traditional ceremonies and cultural festivals organised in the region.

2.3.4 Facilitate roundtables for journalists, writers and experts in literature, arts, women's empowerment, health, nutrition etc.

3. EDUCATION

Mekong- Ganga education cooperation should focus on the promotion of closer interaction in the areas of distance education, information technology use for capacity building in key areas of e-development, and education planning, research, and language training.

3.1. Promote the exchange of students and faculty:

3.1.1. Encourage the awarding of scholarships to Member Countries' students to pursue studies in the prioritised areas.

3.2. Strengthen collaboration between MGC universities and education research and management institutes:

3.2.1. Establish a directory of universities, education research and management institutes, and information technology training centres in MGC countries.

3.2.2. Develop networking and twinning arrangements among MGC universities and institutes.

3.2.3. Create a forum for the exchange of experience in teaching, learning as well as education-policy making

3.3 Promote joint education and training projects, for the teaching of the languages of MGC countries, including English language training:

3.3.1 Organise symposiums and seminars on education-related issues of Member Countries.

3.3.2 Promote cooperation programmes in illiteracy eradication, continuing education and distance education for the poorer section of population and people in remote areas.

3.3.3 Develop education and vocational training programmes for community development including the benefit of women and children, and people living in remote areas.

3.3.4 Translate the classics of each MGC country into the languages of the other MGC countries with a view to contributing to the preservation of cultural identities and traditional values of each Member Country. Such

programmes may be taken in cooperation with the existing ASEAN programmes.

3.4. Organise education exhibitions and book fairs in Member Countries:

3.4.1 Encourage Member Countries' publishing houses and concerned organisations to participate in MGC education exhibitions and book fairs.

3.4.2 Cooperate in publishing and marketing books of common interests among Member Countries.

3.5 Information Technology training and development:

3.5.1 Promote IT connectivity of educational institutions in the MGC region.

3.5.2 Develop course content and impart educational programmes on the Internet to facilitate human resource development and upgradation of skills to power the information revolution.

3.5.3 Promote connectivity of libraries to share publications.

3.5.4 Encourage Internet-based education.

4. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

MGC cooperation in transport and communication is aimed at facilitating the movement of people and goods among MGC Member Countries conducive to socio-economic development of Member Countries, the development of trade and the promotion of better communication linkages and networking.

4.1 Develop transportation networks among MGC countries:

4.1.1 Assess the present status of the transportation networks in the region.

4.1.2 Foster cooperation in cross-border facilitation, multi-modal transport, infrastructure development, maritime and inland water transport, civil aviation and human resource development.

4.1.3 Enhance the implementation of transport facilitation within the West-East Corridor, Trans-Asian Railway and the Asian Highway projects.

4.2 Promote cooperation in air services and linkages:

4.2.1 Develop air services information networks among MGC countries.

4.2.2 Cooperate in air services and linkages among MGC countries to enhance aviation competitiveness of the region

4.3 Communication and networking

4.3.1 Strengthening rural communication networks.

4.3.2 Training of telecom professionals.

4.3.3 Establishing a regional hub for meeting communication requirements of MGC countries.

5. FUNDING

5.1 Each country should consider the possibility of contributing seed money to MGC Fund for each sector. Efforts should be made to seek technical assistance and financial support from donor agencies and countries, and international organisations as appropriate.

6. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

6.1 Ministerial Meetings will be held every year in an MGC member country on an alphabetical rotation basis

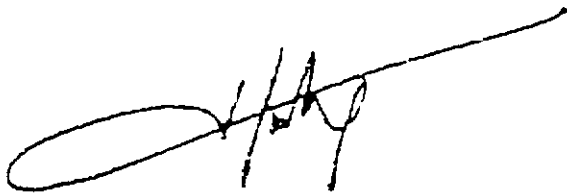
6.2 To facilitate the implementation of cooperation arrangements agreed by the Ministers, MGC Senior Official Meetings will be held annually, back to back with ASEAN-India SOM if the latter is hosted by an MGC Member Country. In case ASEAN-India SOM is hosted by a non-MGC country, the MGC SOM shall be held separately in an MGC Member Country on an alphabetical rotation basis.

6.3 The Hosting Country shall assume the secretarial work for Ministerial Meetings and SOMs.

6.4 In endorsing this Programme of Action, it is recognised that its successful implementation requires the collective commitment, coordination, and cooperation of the Member Countries' relevant agencies. The implementation of the approved work programmes/plans shall be further carried out by Member Countries, through designated focal points.

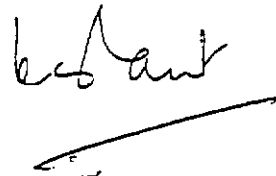
Done in Hanoi, Vietnam on the twenty eighth day of July 2001.

For the Government of
the Kingdom of Cambodia



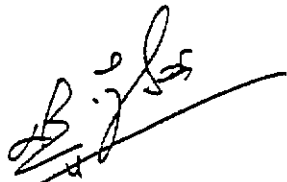
HOR NAMHONG
Senior Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation

For the Government of
the Republic of India



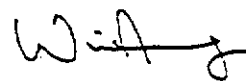
K.C. PANT
Deputy Chairman
Planning Commission

For the Government of
the Lao People's Democratic Republic



SOMSAVAT LENGSAVAD
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Government of
the Union of Myanmar



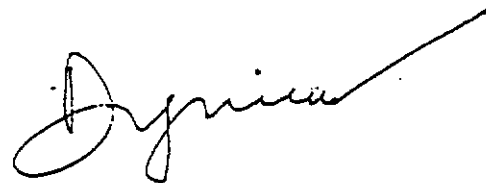
U WIN AUNG
Minister for Foreign Affairs

For the Government of
the Kingdom of Thailand



DR. PRACHA GUNA-KASEM
Special Envoy
Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

For the Government of
the Socialist Republic of Vietnam



NGUYEN DY NIEN
Minister of Foreign Affairs

ANNEX I

PROGRAMME OF ACTION: TOURISM

Program 1: Promote Awareness of the Enormous Cultural Richness and Diversity of the MGC Region and its Many Attractive Tourist Destinations.

1. The Meeting noted the following activities to be implemented by the MGC tourism expert group:

- 1) Organize familiarization trips for media and travel agents.
- 2) Hold MGC-wide cultural festivals.
- 3) Encourage cross-border packages.
- 4) Participate in international travel / tourism fairs.
- 5) Development of the MGC Directory of Tourism Products and Services.
- 6) Study the feasibility of establishing an MGC Tourism Fund.
- 7) Share information on the ecotourism promotion programmes, air linkages and religious tourism circuit.

2. The Meeting noted the possible marketing strategies to be undertaken which include organizing media familiarization trips within the subregion as well as from major tourist generating countries. India, France, UK, Germany, Italy, Scandinavian countries, ASEAN countries as well as Australia and New Zealand were being listed among them. India and Thailand were assigned to implement the project with close consultation from member countries. It was suggested that the overseas tourist offices, embassies, and private sector, especially airlines and tour operators would be approached to assist in the activities

3. The Meeting addressed the need to develop an inventory of major cultural festivals in the MGC countries in order to promote the cultural richness of the region. Thailand, as the coordinating country for the MGC, was requested to provide a questionnaire to be filled in by member countries.

4. The Meeting noted the needs to encourage cross-border packages in order to develop the tourism product of the MGC. The representative from ESCAP informed the Meeting of the tremendous

potential to promote Asian highway tourism. The report on Tourism Development along the Asian Highway has been completed. Myanmar was requested to explore the tourism potential, opportunities as well as obstacles for promotion of cross border packages.

5. The Meeting agreed with the proposal to participate in international travel / tourism fairs. The Chairman asked the representative from PATA to consider the possibility to invite India as an observer at the 7th Mekong Tourism Forum to be held in Myanmar in April 2002.

6. The Meeting noted the proposal to develop the MGC Directory of Tourism Products and Services. Cambodia was requested to lead the implementation of the activity with the cooperation from Thailand. The Chairman informed the meeting that the GMS Travel Manual, which was recently completed, could be used as the guideline for the MGC Directory of Tourism Products and Services. India was requested to provide tourism-related information to be included in the directory.

7. The Meeting acknowledged the need to explore the feasibility of establishing an MGC tourism fund. Vietnam was assigned to compile the report on this issue.

8. The Meeting noted that member countries share the information on the ecotourism promotion programme, air linkages, and religious tourism circuit. The secretariat was asked to provide the forms to be filled in by MGC countries in order to develop an inventory of the tourism products and related services to be marketed. The representative of ESCAP reported that ESCAP has published the report on Developing Ecotourism in the Asian Region. The meeting noted with interest and requested ESCAP to make the copies available for MGC countries.

Program 2: Encourage Tourism Investment

9. It was proposed that development of MGC destination tourism products to attract investment in the tourism sector is needed. The Meeting agreed with the proposal to establish an MGC Tourism Investment Guide. India was requested to compile related information with member countries to be further developed into the MGC Tourism Investment Guide. The Chairman suggested that the ASEAN Tourism Investment Guide could be utilized as the resource paper

and guideline for this purpose. However, information in the ASEAN Tourism Investment Guide needs to be updated.

Program 3: Cooperation in Tourism Education and Training

10. The Meeting agreed that the following activities could be undertaken in order to improve the skills of tourism personnel in MGC Countries:

- (a) sharing resources, skills and training facilities,
- (b) exchanging missions of tourism personnel,
- (c) sharing information on tourism statistical data and related information,
- (d) facilitation information access with regard to cultural and historical heritage in MGC countries,
- (e) making joint efforts to attract financial and technical assistance from third countries as well as international organizations.

11. The ESCAP representative briefed the Meeting regarding ESCAP's activities on tourism training, especially ESCAP's initiatives on the establishment of a Network of Asia - Pacific Education and Training Institutes in Tourism (APETIT) and the launch of the Plan of Action for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Asian and Pacific Region (PASTA). The Chairman stressed the importance of human resource development and further suggested that MGC countries identify their training needs to the Secretariat for future training activities to be organized for member countries. He proposed that some of the activities could be implemented immediately, especially the exchange of curriculum.

12. The PATA representative informed the Meeting that PATA is developing "Best Practice Book on Sustainable Tourism Development". He suggested that PATA could render its assistance in the area of training, especially in the aspect of marketing.

Program 4: Facilitate the Travel of People among Member Countries

13. The Meeting agreed to the proposal to simplify tourist visa procedures and rationalize barriers impeding tourism growth. It was further noted that direct air links between major cities are needed for the successful promotion. Lao PDR was assigned to compile the report on existing visa formalities of the MGC countries and a

proposal to further improve the procedures in order to allow a greater tourist traffic to and within the region. The Meeting also requested Lao PDR to explore the possibility of increasing direct air links between MGC major cities.

Program 5: Promote Ecotourism

14. The Meeting noted that Thailand will compile a report on guidelines for assessing and monitoring the impact on the natural environment. The Meeting agreed with the proposed activity to promote public information and awareness, especially at the local community level.

ANNEX II

PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mekong- Ganga Cooperation (MGC) in the area of transport and communications is aimed at facilitating the movement of goods and people among MGC member countries and to create a conducive environment for the socio-economic development, the development of trade, and the promotion of the better communication linkages and networking. The Programme of Action for MGC in Transport and Communications is the followings:

1. Development of road and rail networks among MGC countries:

1.1. Assess the present status of the transportation networks in the region.

1.2. Enhance the implementation of transport facilitation within the East-West Corridor, Trans-Asian Railway and the Asian Highway projects.

2. Foster cooperation in cross-border facilitation, multi-modal transport, infrastructure development, and human resource development.

3. Identify and promote common areas of interest and action in maritime and inland water transport:

3.1. Share information on maritime training facilitates and opportunities

3.2. Develop strategies for promotion and development of IWT in the area of skills, techniques, financing, training...

3.3. Hold workshops on port privatization and productivity enhancement.

4. Promote cooperation in the air services and linkages:

4.1. Develop air services information networks among MGC countries.

4.2 Cooperation in air services and linkages among MGC countries to enhance aviation competitiveness of the region.

5. Communication and Networking:

5.1. Strengthening rural communication networks.

5.2. Human Resource Development on Telecom and Information Technology (IT).

5.3. Establishing a regional hub for meeting communication requirements of MGC countries.

ANNEX III

PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

After considering the presentations of the various delegates on the agenda, the following points were identified for furthering the MGC initiative on cooperation in education:

1. Languages, Book Promotion and Scholarships

a) The Indian side would make arrangements for English language training at its institutions. If necessary, custom-made courses could be designed for training English language teachers, diplomats and professionals. It was agreed that the sending country would pay for the international airfare and the receiving country would pay for the fees and local hospitality.

b) Steps would be taken for the promotion of books in each other's languages and participation in the Book fairs organized by the various countries. The Indian side would provide, on a complimentary basis, stalls for the MGC countries, to participate in the World Book Fair in January 2002. Foreign countries participating in the Fair could book orders but cannot make direct sales.

c) It was agreed that the classics of the MGC countries would be translated into English and other MGC languages and efforts made for co-publication of such works. Organisations in the MGC countries would be identified for this purpose.

d) Given the growing importance of copyright issues, the MGC countries would take steps to discuss among themselves their common concerns in copyright matters in conformity with WIPO standards, and including those pertaining to co-publications of the MGC.

e) Regarding scholarships, it was agreed that there should be better sharing of information and the building of a database on the availability and utilization of scholarships being offered by the individual MGC countries to each other.

f) It was proposed that each of the MGC countries could annually offer a total of 5 scholarships to be known as the MGC Scholarships. The subject and the participating institutions would be identified by each country based on its respective strengths in different fields.

2. Technical Education

a) Most of the member countries mentioned the need for skill upgradation of their teachers, particularly in IT, computer education and management. The Indian side offered that they could organize special courses at leading institutions in this regard through Educational Consultants India Ltd. (Ed-CIL), New Delhi on terms to be mutually agreed.

b) It was recommended that the MGC countries should establish Chairs in leading universities in emerging areas, such as IT, Biotechnology etc. Funding arrangements for setting up these Chairs would be mutually agreed.

c) Leading institutions would be encouraged to enter into twinning arrangements with identified partner institutions in the MGC countries, and to exchange scholars and faculty.

d) Efforts would be made to jointly set up Centres of Excellence in each others' countries particularly in frontier areas of science and technology.

e) It was recommended that system of the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas of each others' countries would be established.

f) Exchange programmes would be set up for skill upgradation in the informal sector in fields in which the MGC countries have special expertise.

3. Higher Education

(a) It was agreed that there would be greater cooperation between the MGC countries for exchange of information on their higher education system so that an adequate database could be built up. This would include basic statistics on higher education.

(b) It was agreed that the countries would concentrate on the promotion of excellence in the areas of science, mathematics and the social sciences. Modalities for this would be worked out that would include inter-linkages between the Universities and other institutions of higher education including research institutes.

(c) Vocational education was identified as a key areas in the MGC region. Exchange of information including programmes and projects undertaken in various countries of the MGC region would be done. There would also be linkages between institutions dealing with vocational education in the MGC countries for identifying programmes and projects of mutual interest.

(d) It was agreed that management in service industries would be another area calling for programme intervention.

(e) The Indian side urged the member countries to make full use of the facilities & courses offered by NIEPA, New Delhi for sending their participants for educational planning, management and administration.

(f) In addition to the MGC Scholarships, India offered to provide for 10 scholarships, on an annual basis for two years, to each of the other MGC countries. The durations, subjects and institutions for these scholarships would be decided in consultation with the Chair of the MGC.

4. Funding

It was agreed that the MGC countries should seek financial assistance from international organizations such as UNDP, UNESCO, ESCAP and ADB for joint education and training projects.

5. Other Recommendations

(a) It was recommended that the MGC initiatives in human resource development should tie in with and supplement the cooperation already underway in the ASEAN region.

(b) The training programmes decided upon could be organized in selected institutions in MGC countries, or can be done by sending faculty for custom-made programmes in the recipient country

ANNEX IV:

PROGRAMME OF ACTION ON CULTURE

After considering the views of the various delegates to the First Expert Group meeting, the following points were identified for furthering the MGC initiative on cooperation in the field of culture:

I. Promote Joint Research on Cultural Heritage of Member Countries

1. Develop source materials on culture, which member countries can translate and replicate, for the teaching, dissemination and learning of MGC Culture.
2. Each country will consider to provide a minimum of one scholarship per annum to each of the other MGC countries in field of Culture under the scheme called MGC Cultural Exchange Scholarships.
3. India agreed to offer one scholarship per annum to each MGC country for undertaking a course in museology and/or conservation at the National Museum Institute, New Delhi and at the Institute of Archaeology, New Delhi.
4. A Museum of Traditional Textiles displaying the designs, looms, dyeing and weaving methods and samples of traditional textiles of MGC Countries would be set up at Siem Reap, Cambodia in view of the fact that Siem Reap already attracts a vast number of international tourists. Each MGC country will nominate an experts to develop this project. Efforts will be made for obtaining international funding for this Museum.
5. There should be a comprehensive online database prepared on the traditional textiles of the member countries. Experts on traditional textiles in the MGC countries should also be identified in the database. Thereafter, a MGC Conference on Traditional Textiles could be organised in order to preserve and promote the relevant skills, and in order to seek international markets for these products.

6. Training programmes for MGC candidates in the field of culture such as on handicraft promotion and exports, preservation of manuscripts, traditional textiles, archaeology, museology, etc., could be organised in the MGC countries that have expertise in specific areas.

7. The training programmes decided upon could be organised in selected institutions in MGC countries, or can be done by sending faculty to other MGC countries for custom-made programmes in the recipient country.

8. It was agreed that MGC countries would establish networks for the exchange of information, and that steps would be taken to ensure continuing dialogue on cultural matters between MGC countries. It was also suggested that an IT centre on MGC Cultural Cooperation be established in India.

II. Undertake Conservation, Preservation and Promotion Programmes to Revitalise and Further Develop MGC's Cultural Heritage

9. It was agreed that one institution would be identified in each country that would cooperate under the MGC in the conservation and preservation of old manuscripts (MSS). These institutions would exchange experts, information, and techniques for such activities.

10. Experts in MGC countries on conservation and preservation of MSS would be sent to each other's countries to support national efforts in this regard.

11. Training in conservation and preservation of MSS would be provided in the relevant institutions of other MGC countries.

12. a) The central archives authority in each of the MGC countries will collaborate with each other for microfilming and documentation of all old MSS in the Member countries.

b) The central archives authority in each of the MGC countries will collaborate with each other in the location, identification, compiling and cataloguing of all old MSS in the custody of Government departments, libraries, monasteries, temples, pagodas and private individuals.

c) For both the above projects, efforts will be made to obtain international funding.

13. Conduct surveys on cultural heritage sites, monuments and artefacts to compile and publish a Directory on Heritage Sites, Monuments and Artefacts for the MGC region in a standardised format. It would be also available online to facilitate updating.

14. Make joint efforts to attract technical and financial assistance from third countries and international organisations, particularly UNESCO, for the restoration, conservation, and preservation of cultural heritage in the MGC region.

15. It was agreed that the MGC countries would cooperate in providing assistance for the printing of literature, brochures and other tourist materials for distribution to visitors at MGC heritage sites.

16. The MGC countries will assist each other in providing appropriate photographs, displays and plaques for the information of the visitors at important cultural sites and monuments of the MGC countries. The format of such display material should be standardised.

17. Apart from the major heritage sites, the MGC countries will assist each other in the conservation and restoration of lesser known archaeological sites and monuments.

18. It is necessary in the export of cultural products, to define precisely the meaning of this term. Cultural products cover modern handicrafts and textiles, but rigorously exclude historic artefacts. The current situation regarding the looting of cultural and archaeological sites in the region is deteriorating historic sites, and joint efforts should be undertaken for protecting the cultural heritage of MGC countries.

III. Promote Cultural Exchange among Member Countries

19. It was agreed that efforts should be made for the promotion of exports of handicraft items and gifts having distinctive aesthetic and utility value. The important marketing Strategies to be adopted are therefore briefly as follows.

i) Participation in the trade fairs organised by recognised international marketing bodies.

ii) Exchange of information on design and product development.

iii) Linkages of online websites of all promotional bodies concerned with the craft industry of all six countries.

iv) India will offer free space for the participation of member countries in the Indian Handicraft and Gift fair which is held in October annually in New Delhi.

20. A database highlighting the dance, music and theatrical traditions of the MGC countries would be prepared.

21. There should be identification and listing of Government bodies, university departments and important private institutions dealing with performing arts in the member countries as the basis for further cooperation in this field.

22. Documentary films on important cultural and archaeological sites and monuments in the Member Countries should be provided to the other MGC countries for broadcast on public television channels

23. It was agreed that we should request government authorities and tourist agencies to facilitate cheaper group travel so that there is a greater movement of tourists to our important cultural and archaeological sites and monuments.

24. It was agreed that puppet theatre, particularly shadow puppet theatre, was a popular art form in the MGC countries. Scholars and practitioners of puppetry could be sent on exchange visits to other MGC countries.

25. Efforts should be made, through performances and seminars to deal with the emerging issues in traditional performing arts.

26. In the field of music, it is widely understood that musical instruments are the best living evidence of the past. A large number of musical instruments are shared among the Asian countries though many of them in modified forms. It would be most fruitful to undertake scientific research and study in this field for historical reasons and for adaptation to contemporary musical developments.

27. Encourage the participation of Member Countries in important traditional ceremonies and cultural festivals organised in the region.