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ข่าวสารนิเทศ Press Release सेचक्रियुक्तसत्तथा

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ACMECS Ministerial Retreat in Krabi, Thailand

On 2 November 2004, the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Ministerial Meeting was held in Krabi, Thailand. The Meeting was held subsequently to the Senior Officials' Meeting on 1 November 2004. At the conclusion of the ACMECS Ministerial Meeting, H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Foreign Minister of Thailand who chaired the Meeting, gave a press conference as follows:

- The ACMECS Ministerial Meeting is the first ministerial level meeting organized since the ACMECS Summit, which was held last November in Bagan. ACMECS is a building block that would complement ASEAN and enable the achievement of an Asian Community in the long term.

- The Meeting was organized to review the progress of ACMECS' programs under its five areas of cooperation. The Meeting welcomed the progress achieved in all five areas of its cooperation, with a number of projects already having been implemented such as tariff reduction, transport linkages, twin-cities, contract farming, and tourism cooperation. The members agreed to establish a working group in each area of cooperation with country coordinator to ensure better coordination with Thailand as the coordinator of the Trade and Investment Facilitation; Myanmar as the coordinator of the Agricultural and Industrial Cooperation; Laos as the coordinator of the Transport Linkages; Cambodia as the coordinator of the Tourism Cooperation; and Vietnam the coordinator of the Human Resource Development.

- The Meeting included its newest member Vietnam, who was admitted into the membership earlier this year on 10 May 2004 and her formal admission was underscored with the signing of the "Protocol to the Bagan Declaration on the Admission of Vietnam to the ACMECS". In addition, for the first time, the Meeting also included a discussion session between the ACMECS members and its development partners, namely Australia, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

- ACMECS also supplements the existing framework of cooperation such as the existing sub-regional triangular cooperation and the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

- The Meeting underscored the opportunities that would be obtainable from closer tourism cooperation, particularly by combining regional tourist destinations. Strengthening air links between the members would facilitate greater tourism and economic prosperity. The Meeting also explored the idea of establishing an ACMECS single visa to help encourage an even greater number of tourists from non-ACMECS countries.

- The Meeting agreed to pursue the idea of constructing an ACMECS website accessible for those interested including development partners and exploring new areas of cooperation such as alternative energy such as bio-diesel and ethanol.

- Mobilizing of financial resources is seen as a key challenge that can be addressed by enhancing involvement of development partners, financial institutions, and encouraging greater participation of the private sector into the framework to give impetus to ACMECS cooperation.

- Development partners expressed keen interest and support for ACMECS being a home-grown initiative that would serve to promote regional integration by promoting greater prosperity and reducing the economic disparity within the region.

- Development partners also agreed to coordinate existing bilateral and regional programs to support ACMECS. Japan formally announced its commitment to the ACMECS framework. Thailand-France Action Plan and Thailand-Germany MOU on trilateral cooperation included references to ACMECS. Furthermore, ADB views ACMECS and GMS as mutually reinforcing and complimentary and would look into the possibility of allocating financial resources to the framework.

- It was agreed that the ACMECS Senior Officials' Meeting would be held at least every six months and the Ministerial level meeting would be held every year. Cambodia will be the host of the next ACMECS Ministerial Meeting in 2005. In addition, a Leaders' Summit would also be organized every two years. In 2005, Thailand will host of the second ACMECS Summit.
