

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING GOVERNING BOARD NO.2/2022

Key Agreements and Recommendations by MI Steering Committee for Consideration by the MI Council

Section	Key Points	Steering Committee Decision
5. Matters for Acknowledgement		
5.1 Activity 2H, 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MI Strategic Plan has been used as a guiding principle in the planning and implementation of all MI activities and is in line with the Results Framework 2021-2025. • Due to the improved situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, MI has started on-site events in parallel with its online events. Between Jan-Nov 2022, MI implemented 34 projects, developed/updated 60 curricula and organized 60 capacity development activities. A total of 2,056 direct participants attended MI's 60 capacity building events. Most of the participants were from Cambodia (23%) followed by Lao PDR (19%). Around 16% of the total participants were from non-GMS countries. 	The SC members appreciated MI's program implementation.
5.1.1 Program Progress		
A. Core Development Area		
B. Flagship Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towards Post-COVID-19 Resilient Economies: COVID-19 recovery-related activities have been incorporated into MI Core Programs. • The establishment of the GMS Knowledge Network (GMS KN) is progressing. On October 21, 2022, the 1st Meeting of the GMS Knowledge Network Steering Committee (GMSKN SC) was organized by the GMS Secretariat. The concept of the GMS KN was later presented at a GMS Ministerial Conference on December 8, in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. • The GMS City Nodes Network activities are planned to be implemented in the various strategic GMS cities. So far, no GMS City Forum has been organized. 	Flagship initiatives were acknowledged by the SC members.
5.1.2 Institutional Strengthening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On Monitoring and Evaluation (MEL), MI conducted a Capacity Needs Assessment, revised its Logical Frameworks, operationalized new tools with orientation to the key staff from departments/units, introduced Results-based templates for the Annual Performance Report 2022 and Annual Work Plan and Budget 2023 and explored the possibility of collaboration between MI and KKUIC. • The Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) Unit expanded its services by serving as a sub-contractor to the ASEAN-German Cooperation Project implemented by GIZ in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC). • In terms of Partnership and Resource Management (PRM), MI continued to increase its visibility in international fora, enhance existing partnerships, and promote new partnerships across GMS Cooperation Frameworks, particularly with the ASEAN, GMS Economic Cooperation Program, Mekong-RoK Cooperation Fund MKCF 6th Call, and ACMECS. 	MI efforts in institutional strengthening were acknowledged.
A. Greater Mekong Community Affairs		
B. Administration C. Finance		
5.2 Annual Performance Review 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Annual Performance Review 2022 was presented in VDO format. Link to view https://youtu.be/PM3_jE187bw 	The Annual Performance Review 2022 was

		acknowledged by SC members.
5.2 Report on MI Coordinating Agencies' Meeting 2/2022 Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Meeting noted the discussions and results of the MI Coordinating Agencies (CAs) Meeting No. 2/2022 on November 22, 2022 with two key recommendations. The first was the representation of GMS countries to the MI Governing Board which should be at different levels: Council Member: Director General or higher (Policy Decision Making body); Steering Committee Member: Deputy Director General level (Policy and Program scrutiny for submission to the Council); and Coordinating Agent Member: Director level. The second recommendation was to conduct a mid-term review and joint monitoring mechanisms of the implementation of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025. 	The report on MI CA meeting was acknowledged by SC members.
5.4 Results of Mekong Forum 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On October 19, the Mekong Forum 2022 was organized on the theme 'Accelerating Post COVID-19 Recovery and Building Resilience in the Greater Mekong Subregion'. More than 200 representatives attended the Forum both onsite and online. 6 thematic workshops were organized, demonstrating the linkages between recovery and transition towards building resilience, on the following themes: i) Inclusive and Resilient Society; ii) Seamless Connectivity; and iii) GMS' Priority Sectors (Agriculture and Tourism). 	MI's efforts to support COVID-19 recovery and building resilience and solicit more support from SC were acknowledged.
6. Matters for Consideration		
6.1 MI Annual Work Plan and Budget 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MI will continue to implement existing projects according to the Workplan. For projects that are soon to end, such as NZAP, MI will work on the new proposal. To reach the targeted revenue, MI will focus on fund raising and developing new concept notes and proposals, especially long-term projects for more sustainable financing. 	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council.
6.2 Implementation of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025 A. Endorsement of the ToR of the Joint Monitoring Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On the implementation of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025, MI presented the Concept Note of the Mid-Term Review of the MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025 which is planned to be conducted in Q3 of 2023. 	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council.
B. Endorsement of the Concept Note of the Mid-Term Review of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In carrying out the Mid-term Review and subsequent monitoring of the Strategic Plan, the tasks to be assigned to the Steering Committee and the CAs as in joint monitoring mechanisms was presented for approval. 	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council.
6.3 Endorsement of New Steering Committee Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government of Lao PDR has appointed Mr. Khamphinh Philakone, Deputy Director-General of Economic Affairs Department, as a new Steering Committee Member of MI for the Lao PDR. In addition, Ms. Phonekeo Sakdavong, Director of Regional Economic Cooperation Division, Economic Affairs Department, will serve as the CA Member of MI for Lao PDR. 	Acknowledged for submission to the MI Council.

6.4 Endorsement of External Auditor for 2023 and 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Meeting endorsed PricewaterhouseCoopers (Lao) Sole Co., Ltd. as the External Auditor for 2023 and 2024 	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council.
6.5 Endorsement of Subcommittee for 2022 Executive Director Performance Evaluation, and End-of-Term Performance Evaluation and Term of Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Steering Committee recommended to the Council that a subcommittee be formed to assess MI ED's performance in 2022 and End-of-Term Performance Evaluation and Term of Office as following <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee Member of P.R China - Mr. Ke Yousheng Steering Committee Member of Thailand – Mrs. Arunee Hiam Honorary Advisor - Dr. Jean-Pierre A. Verbiest Chairman Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee as observer 	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council.
7: Country Reports of Steering Committee Members	Please refer to Annex 1.	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council
8: Date and Venue of Governing Board Meeting 2/2022	July, 2023. Exact date and venue to be confirmed.	Approved for endorsement by the MI Council

ITEM 1: WELCOME REMARKS

- Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, the MI Steering Committee Chair (the Chair), opened the meeting at 2:00pm on Dec 20, 2022 at the headquarters of MI together with the MI Executive Director, and all six members of GMS government representatives, who attended either onsite or online. The Chair outlined key matters for acknowledgement and for consideration as the basis for recommendations to be consolidated for presentation to the Council members at the next day's meeting.

ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

- The meeting adopted the agenda of the Steering Committee 2/2022 as proposed by the MI Secretariat on December 20, 2022.

ITEM 3: BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS

- Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, MI Executive Director, informed participants that there would be a group photo session after Agenda Item 5 followed by a 15-minute break. A second break of 30-minutes duration was scheduled after Agenda Item 9. The Steering Committee members would be requested to meet at 5:30pm for the Summary and Conclusion of the Meeting with the meeting slated to conclude at 6:00pm. The draft minutes of the meeting 2/2022 will be circulated by Friday, January 20, 2023 and the members are requested to send their comments to the MI Secretariat by the end of January 2023. Adoption of the minutes would be held at the MI Steering Committee Meeting 1/2023. Lastly, all Steering Committee members were invited to attend as observers the Council Meeting 2/2022 being held on December 21 at 8:30am.

ITEM 4: ACTION PROGRESS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE GOVERNING BOARD MEETING 1/2022 AND MINUTES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 1/2022

- There being no further comments on the minutes of the last meeting, the Chair proposed that the minutes of Steering Committee meeting 1/2022 be officially adopted.
- No further comments were received on the action progress of recommendations.

ITEM 5: MATTERS FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A. CORE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

5.1 Activity Report of 2H, 2022

6. In terms of 2H/2022, Program Activities have been progressing in line with the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and the Annual Work Plan 2022, despite the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation. There were 98 activities implemented from 34 projects.
7. Due to the improved situation of COVID-19, MI has started on-site events in parallel with its online events. For the period Jan-Nov 2022, MI implemented 34 projects, developed/updated 60 curricula and organized 60 capacity development activities. 2,056 direct participants attended MI's 60 capacity-building events. Most of the participants were from Cambodia (23%) followed by Lao PDR (19%). Around 16% of the total participants were from non-GMS countries.

Comments from the Steering Committee Members

Mr. Ke Yousheng

Representative of P.R. China
Permanent Representative of China to UNESCAP
Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Thailand

Mr. Ke expressed appreciation to the MI Secretariat for its hard work in 2022. He recognized the progress that MI has made despite the difficulties posed by the pandemic and noted that MI had strived to develop outcome-oriented projects and use a results-based framework. Mr. Ke mentioned that P.R. China had approved 3 new projects and other projects funded by CSG and the LMC special fund. P.R. China was also looking forward to effective implementation in 2023 and hoped that all projects would contribute to advancing sustainable development in the subregion and hasten COVID-19 recovery for all member countries.

Flagship Initiatives

8. In terms of Flagship Initiatives, "Towards Post COVID-19 Resilient Economies" has provided a framework project for the COVID-19 recovery-related activities. Some of the activities have been incorporated into the relevant MI Core Programs.
9. On "GMS Knowledge Network (GMS KN)", MI, in its capacity as the regional coordinator and Co-chair of GMS KN's Steering Committee, convened the first meeting in October. MI was invited to present the GMS KN concept at the GMS Ministerial Conference on December 8 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. MI is currently waiting to formalize the agreement with ADB/ GMS Secretariat. On "GMS City Nodes Network", no forum has been organized as yet.

7. MI's Contribution to Broader GMS Cooperation Frameworks

10. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of Thailand has discussed with MI its contribution to **establishing ACMECS Interim Secretariat (AIS)**, and MI has agreed to support the Mekong Cooperation Unit (MCU), MFA, with its expertise, experience, and network. The key role of MI would be to support the establishment and execution of the AIS, with the back office of the MCU providing technical assistance. The collaboration will be done under an MOU to be signed between MI and MFA to be effective for three years from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025.
11. MI has developed the **Implementation Plan for the Framework for CLMV Development**. The plan identifies relevant targets associated with the establishment of an Advanced Global Business Hub for CLMV to achieve sustainable upper-middle income economy status by 2030. Specific actions identified to improve connectivity

through enablers include institutional capacity, human capital, as well as sound and affordable utility services (namely electricity) to support key economic sectors with a comparative advantage (i.e., agriculture and food, and tourism). MI conducted four virtual National Consultation meetings in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam.

A.1.2 Institutional Strengthening

A. Greater Mekong Community

12. On Monitoring and Evaluation (MEL), MI conducted a Capacity Needs Assessment, revised its Logical Frameworks, operationalized new tools with orientation to the key staff from departments/units, introduced Results-based templates for the Annual Performance Report 2022 and Annual Work Plan and Budget 2023 and explored the possibility of collaboration between MI and KKUIC.
13. To broaden public and internal awareness and understanding of MI's expanded portfolio of services, and increase impact visibility for wider GMS stakeholder engagement and collaboration, various publications such as the monthly E-Briefing, 2021 Annual Report, videos and corporate brochures, flyers, roll-ups, and mascots have been developed. To maintain the smooth functionality of online platforms and daily operations, website maintenance and relevant subscriptions have been renewed. In August this year, the Communications and Knowledge Management (CKM) unit has also expanded its services by serving as a sub-contractor to the ASEAN-German Cooperation Project, "Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Value Chain in ASEAN" (ASEAN AgriTrade), implemented by GIZ in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC).
14. In terms of Partnership and Resource Mobilization, MI continued to increase its visibility in international fora, enhance existing partnerships, and promote new partnerships across GMS/ Mekong Cooperation Frameworks, notably with the ASEAN Secretariat, GMS Economic Cooperation Program, Mekong-RoK Cooperation Fund MKCF 6th Call, ACMECS, MRC Secretariat, and the National University of Laos, Lao PDR.

B. Administration and Human Resources

B.1. Human Resources

15. On Human Resources, 14 staff were recruited this year (10 regular staff and 4 temporary staff). As of now, there are 45 MI staff, 40% male and 60% female, of 12 nationalities. All the GMS member countries are represented among the staff in 2022.

B.2. Administration

16. A total of 473 rounds of transportation services were provided to MI, including 29 rounds of VIP support, 281 rounds for MI duties, 163 rounds for the courses (including rental van), and MI staff. MI organized 354 events in its conference rooms, namely 126 online meetings, 141 onsite meetings, 22 onsite training courses, 5 hybrid training courses, 21 hybrid meetings, 4 online webinars, 2 online workshops, and 33 online training courses.
17. On IT, MI IT team supported the program departments in conducting training and workshops smoothly and effectively both in Thailand and abroad, while MI's IT system continued to be upgraded to reflect the increase in online or hybrid events.

B.3. Procurement

18. In 2022, MI purchased office supplies, goods/services through 561 purchase requests and 132 purchase orders. MI hired 49 consultants and resource persons to support its program activities. Moreover, the revised procurement guidelines for hiring Resource Persons and consultants were updated and approved by SMT. 100% of the procurements were completed in time and meet the expected quality both for goods and services. In addition, MI has signed 24 long-term agreements with quality suppliers.

C. Finance

19. Revenue and expenses as of October 2022 were US\$2,506,248. Total MI expenses amounted to US\$2,321,736, covering expenses from project and program delivery (US\$1,613,343) and operation expenses (US\$639,945). Non-cash operation expenses were US\$68,447. MI recorded net earnings of US\$184,513 as of October 31, 2022, and MI earned US\$282,959 excluding non-cash expenses. All the countries have now transferred the full annual contributions.

Comments from the Steering Committee Members

Mr. Ke Yousheng

Representative of P.R. China
Permanent Representative of China to UNESCAP
Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Thailand

Mr. Ke congratulated MI on the healthy financial situation in 2022 resulting in a surplus. He added that China has already allocated some funding for projects, hoping this will help improve MI's finance further. He noted the increase in the number of staff and wanted to encourage MI secretariat to recruit more staff from the 6 GMS countries as they would have better knowledge of the subregion. He also recognized the efforts of the MI secretariat in expanding cooperation and partnership for which China very much supports MI to work in a multi-stakeholder manner. However, he wanted to draw attention to the global situation which is becoming more complex and urged the Secretariat to be more cautious in selecting partners. All in all, by expanding partners, the focus should remain on the goal of attaining sustainable development.

Responses

Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee

Chairman, Steering Committee
Bangkok, Thailand

20. Mr. Narongchai responded that he very much appreciated this comment. He personally believed in open regionalism, which means being friendly to everyone and wanting everyone to be friendly toward the region as well. Therefore, he wanted MI to try to be an open organization, and not jeopardize relations with anyone.

5.1 Annual Performance Review 2022

21. The Annual Performance Review 2022 was presented in a VDO presentation format. Link to view at: https://youtu.be/PM3_jE187bw

5.2 Report on MI Coordinating Agencies' Meeting 2/2022

22. The Meeting noted the discussions and results of the MI Coordinating Agencies (CAs) Meeting No. 2/2022 on November 22, 2022 with two key recommendations. The first was the representation of GMS countries to the MI Governing Board which should be at different levels: Council Member: Director General or higher level (Policy Decision Making body); Steering Committee Member: Deputy Director General level (Policy and Program scrutiny for submission to the Council); and Coordinating Agent Member: Director level. The second recommendation was to conduct a mid-term review and joint monitoring mechanisms of the implementation of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

5.3 Report on Results of Mekong Forum 2022

23. The results of Mekong Forum 2022, which was held on October 19, 2022 in Khon Kaen in a hybrid format, were presented. Held on the theme of "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Recovery and Building Resilience in the Greater Mekong Subregion", the Forum saw the organization of six thematic workshops that demonstrated the

linkages between recovery and transition towards building resilience, on the following themes: i) Inclusive and Resilient Society; ii) Seamless Connectivity; and iii) GMS' Priority Sectors (Agriculture and Tourism). The Council is requested to provide guidance on the priorities and ways in which COVID-19 recovery support should be undertaken in the future.

ITEM 6. Matters for Consideration

6.1 MI Annual Work Plan and Budget 2023

24. MI will continue to implement existing projects according to the Workplan. For projects that are soon to end such as NZAP, MI will work on the new proposal.
25. To reach the targeted revenue, MI will focus on fund raising and developing new concept notes and proposals, especially long-term projects for more sustainable financing.
26. The total program revenue is expected to be US\$ 2,946,710. If project opportunity funds are realized, the revenue will amount to US\$ 3,647,537. Based on the expected revenue, the Meeting endorsed the planned expenditure of US\$ 3,600,221 with a targeted surplus of US\$ 47,316 at the end of 2023.

Transitions of NZAP Support to MI

27. The remaining budget from the current PROSAFE project will be transferred to the new NZAP project upon the commissioning of the project. The project would likely be on the topic of sustainable food systems, including climate smart agriculture & BCG economy, post-COVID-19 recovery support, relevant MI's institutional strengthening (RBM), and the GMS Agriculture Ministerial Meeting (Q4/2023).

Comments from the Steering Committee Members

Mr. Ke Yousheng

28. Mr. Ke sought clarification on the number of projects which will be implemented in 2023, and especially why the number of projects is less than the number of projects in 2022.

Response from Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn

29. Mr. Suriyan explained that the number of projects in 2023 will increase once the projects under opportunity fund are approved. The approved projects will be presented during GB 1/2023.
30. The Meeting endorsed the proposed budget 2023 for submission to the Council for their consideration and approval.

6.2 Implementation of MI Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

A. Endorsement of the ToR of the Joint Monitoring Committee

31. The Meeting agreed on the tasks to be assigned to the Steering Committee and the CAs as joint monitoring mechanisms for this Mid-term Review and subsequent monitoring of the Strategic Plan.

B. Endorsement of the Concept Note of the Mid-Term Review of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025

32. MI is midway through the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and deems it necessary to conduct a mid-term review. The objective is to evaluate the current strategic plan—to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and constraints in the implementation of the current strategic plan; and to recommend possible changes in the remaining duration.

33. The Meeting endorsed the Concept Note of the Mid-Term Review of MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025 which is planned to be conducted in Q3 of 2023.

6.3 Endorsement of New Steering Committee Member

34. The Government of Lao PDR has appointed Mr. Khamphinh Philakone, Deputy Director-General of Economic Affairs Department, as a new Steering Committee Member of MI for the Lao PDR. He is the successor to Ms. Dalylack Keobanhdith. In addition, Ms. Phonekeo Sakdavong, Director of Regional Economic Cooperation Division, Economic Affairs Department, will serve as the Coordinating Agency Member of MI for the Lao PDR.
35. The Meeting acknowledged, endorsed and welcomed the new Steering Committee Member.

6.4 Endorsement of External Auditor for 2023 and 2024

36. The Meeting endorsed PricewaterhouseCoopers (Lao) Sole Co., Ltd. to be the External Auditor for the 2023 and 2024, despite its slightly higher price. Out of the three companies, PWC has delivered quality results, and is credible and reliable among the international community.

6.5 Endorsement of Sub-committee for 2022 Executive Director Performance Evaluation, and End-of-Term Performance Evaluation and Term of Office

37. The Meeting endorsed the Sub-committee for 2022 Executive Director Performance Evaluation, and End-of-Term Performance Evaluation and Term of Office. The members of the Sub-committee will comprise Dr. Jean Pierre A. Verbiest - MI Council Member (Honorary Advisor), Mrs. Arunee Hiam – MI Steering Member, Mr. Ke Yousheng – MI Steering Member, and Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee - MI Council Member (as adviser).

ITEM 7: COUNTRY REPORTS OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

See Annex 1 for the official statements of the six GMS Steering Committee members.

ITEM 8: DATE AND VENUE OF GOVERNING BOARD MEETING 2/2022

38. The Executive Director proposed that the Governing Board Meeting 2/2022 be held in July, 2023. The exact date and venue will be advised later by the Chair of the Council.

ITEM 9: OTHER MATTERS

39. The chair invited the Executive Director of MI to present the summary of the meeting to the members. The summary was accepted by the members to be presented at the following day's Council meeting.
40. As there were no other matters to be discussed, the Chair closed the meeting at 6:00 pm.

ANNEX 1: COUNTRY REPORTS OF STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mr. Hang Suvidya

Deputy Secretary-General
General Secretariat for Population and Development
Ministry of Planning
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am honored and have great pleasure of being at MI in person today. This is the first time I have been able to participate in an MI Steering Committee meeting since being nominated as a steering committee member in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak had already started.

I would like to acknowledge that the role MI plays in advancing regional corporation and integration is crucial, especially in human resource development, cross-border trade and facilitation, and the peace and prosperity of GMS countries.

Cambodia would like to join the other member countries in applauding MI's performance and the achievements made so far despite the unforeseen challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and support the positive spirit of working toward achieving the goals and targets in core programs as well as flagship programs set out in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

Once again, Cambodia would like to congratulate MI on receiving the ASEAN Prize Award. I would also like to suggest that MI expands programs and projects that can help those activities maybe indirectly, and develop training to support the country's development agenda. I also would like to thank MI's development partners who continue their support to make a positive impact on GMS development.

Finally, Cambodia, as a member country, would like to reaffirm and continue its cooperation with MI and MI member states, the other countries in the region, and development partners, in jointly implementing programs, projects, and activities for mutual interest and benefit.

Thank you.

Mr. Ke Yousheng

Permanent Representative
Permanent Mission of China to UNESCAP
Embassy of P.R. China, Bangkok

Dr. Narongchai, chairman of the Steering Committee, Mr. Suriyan, delegates, ladies and gentlemen, and colleagues. It's my great pleasure to attend today's Steering Committee meeting as we complete the end of this year. It is a good time for us to review what we have done in 2022 and also look forward positively toward the next year. I would like to thank MI for preparing today's meeting.

China recognizes the progress made by MI in 2022 and we also want to congratulate all members of MI for their great efforts in delivering this progress. China supports MI to play a greater role in enhancing the capacity building of Mekong countries. As the major donor of MI, this year China supported MI to carry out a number of practical projects in the areas of Global Development Initiatives, digital economy, and food security. China also supported MI's projects through the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund and also with the participation of the Chinese enterprises such as the China Southern Power Grid. These projects have strongly supported MI's function and have made positive contributions to the sustainable development of the subregion.

As we speak, the world has entered a new phase of turbulence and transformation. Global economic recovery is still fragile and unsteady, and uncertainties and instability are also emerging. China insists on putting the people at the center, and upholding the neighborhood policy of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. China and Mekong countries must continue to strengthen cooperation and help each other so as to jointly promote regional economic recovery.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Mekong countries have united as one and helped each other as one. We thank them for the valuable support extended to China. China has also made contributions to our region. China has provided more than 200 million doses of vaccines to Mekong countries and dispatched medical expert teams and aided in the construction of nucleic acid testing laboratories and mobile cabin hospitals to support Mekong countries in their anti-pandemic efforts. China has made full use of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund for Public Health to deepen cooperation in testing capabilities, drug research and development, and vaccine filling and production with Mekong countries. China and Mekong countries have worked closely in 2022 to promote regional economic recovery. Last year, in 2021, the trade volume between China and Mekong countries reached US\$398 billion, which is a year-on-year increase of 23%. China's imports of agricultural products from Mekong countries reached US\$17.4 billion, a year-on-year increase of nearly 33%. In the first year since the opening of the China-Laos Railway, a total of 8.5 million passengers and 11.2 million tons of cargo have been sent. All these efforts among the Mekong countries have made positive achievements toward rigorous connectivity and recovery in the subregion.

China and the Mekong countries continue to deepen the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC). Since the launch of the LMC six years ago, the mechanism has realized rapid development and has become an important subregional platform that improves people's well-being. LMC focuses on development in an action-oriented approach, and has demonstrated robust vitality with strong impetus injected into the subregion. The LMC Special Fund has supported more than 600 projects that benefit the people in the subregion, including projects on solar photovoltaics and coffee production. China has also provided preferential loans to support more than 40 major infrastructure projects in Mekong countries. To further city-level cooperation, China has established nearly 150 pairs of sister provinces and cities with Mekong countries. China welcomes the strengthening of the coordination between MI and LMC, to jointly promote the high-quality "Belt and Road" cooperation, for the common development and prosperity in our sub-region.

In October this year, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China was held successfully, setting the course and providing the blueprint for China's development for now and the years to come. China is ready to pursue peaceful coexistence and common development with all countries on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. We will advance a broader agenda of opening up across more areas and in greater depth, follow the Chinese path to modernization, put in place new systems for a high-standard open economy, and continue to

share our development opportunities with the world, including with the Mekong countries, toward our common agenda.

During the UN General Assembly last year, President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Development Initiative (GDI) which has a general purpose of advancing the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development agenda. China has been working with over 100 countries, including Mekong countries and international organizations to advance the implementation of the initiative for the common development globally and in our region. We welcome MI to actively participate in the implementation and give full play to its advantages. China stands ready to provide more resources for global development cooperation including in our region and for MI, and to work with all relevant parties including the Mekong countries to build a global community of development.

2022 is coming to an end, and we are about to usher in a hopeful 2023. Thanks for the briefing from the secretariat today. We see very positive progress made by Mekong Institute. In the new year, China will continue to strengthen cooperation with Mekong countries and Mekong Institute to jointly address challenges, share development opportunities, and strengthen unity and solidarity. It is also expected that the Mekong Institute will adhere to the development-orientated approach with an outcome-based approach. We hope MI will continue to actively respond to the needs of the member countries, while paying attention to their concerns, and strengthen communication with member countries. We support MI to continue enhancing capacity building for members and for our region, and ensure the implementation of the Strategic Plan (2021-2025) to jointly promote regional sustainable development and build a community for a shared future of peace and prosperity among Mekong–Lancang Countries.

So, thank you and I wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.

Mr. Khamphinh Philakone

Deputy Director General

Government of Lao PDR

(Representative of MI Steering Committee Member for Lao PDR)

Mr. Chair, MI steering committee members, and MI Executive Director, on behalf of Lao PDR, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the organization of this steering committee meeting. I believe that the meeting today is an excellent opportunity for MI and member countries to discuss ongoing cooperation activities and chart the way forward for the implementation of the MI Strategic Plan.

In this regard, I would like to express my sincere congratulations to MI for completing the MI activities and programs as planned which have brought tangible benefits to GMS countries even though the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed serious effects on social and economic development and the livelihoods of the people in the region.

MI has continued implementing its activities and will plan in an adaptive manner to provide support and assistance to the GMS countries in addressing the emerging challenges in capacity building and regional integration. So, I hope that MI will continue to maintain such a good performance for ongoing projects and in the future as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to say that I highly value the cooperation between MI and GMS member countries, in particular the support and assistance from MI to GMS countries, including my own country, on capacity building, human resource development, and so on. I am confident that based on the implementation of its Strategic Plan and flagship initiatives, MI will provide more support to GMS countries to recover from the prolonged impacts of COVID-19 on socio-economic development as well as support GMS countries in achieving their national development priorities related to connectivity, competitiveness and communities.

In this regard, I would like to share with you that Lao PDR has attached great importance to human resource development. Human resource development is one of our national development priorities. Therefore, I really hope that MI will continue supporting and cooperating with Lao PDR in the area of capacity building and other areas. I wish to thank MI for continuing to provide secondment support to Lao PDR, giving opportunities to Lao PDR government officers to enhance their knowledge and skills by working and training at MI.

I would like to propose that MI provides further support to Lao PDR and other GMS countries in the area of training including in-country training and workshops and gives more opportunities to the GMS government officers to work with MI.

Last but not least, I would like to reiterate that Lao PDR stands ready to cooperate closer with MI and the member countries with the aim of translating MI's development plans and objectives into action and overcoming the emerging challenges through both individual and collective efforts.

Ms. Moh Moh Naing

Director

Foreign Economic Relations Department

Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations

Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

Mr. Chair, Dr. Narongchai, Mr. Suriyan, MI Steering Committee members, and MI secretariat: First of all, I would like to congratulate MI for all the completed activities and progress in 2022. I would like to propose a potential area of MI to help our country move beyond COVID-19 and into the social and economic recovery period.

After such a serious crisis, economic recovery is very important and the government considers economic resilience a priority. Myanmar is now encouraging the setting up of micro small and medium enterprises and SMEs. So, we would like to propose targeted training on SMEs development and the provision of capacity building training of trainer programs on nutrition, food safety management, GMP, GHP, and packaging.

At the same time, local manufacturing activities are being promoted as a priority. These activities will create more job opportunities and boost economic recovery beyond the COVID-19 era, with productivity in agriculture and livestock products taking the main role. Our efforts focus on striving to meet local needs and to reach the export quota levels, regionally and globally. So here again, we would like to propose to MI to provide capacity building programs such as workshops and training courses on turning raw materials into value added products that are standardized and qualify for export and also to make local supply chain linkages.

Ladies and gentlemen, with regard to 2023's 3 programs, namely SEE, ADC and TIF, many activities will be implemented in 2023. In this regard, we hope for equitable inclusion and equitable participation of all GMS countries in all these programs. Thank you.

Mrs. Arunee Hiam

Director
Development Promotion and Coordination Division
Thailand International Cooperation Agency
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand

Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, MI Steering Committee Chairman; Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, MI Executive Director; distinguished steering committee members, and colleagues. First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Chair and Mr. Suriyan and the team for organizing the MI governing board meeting and making it available both in person and online this time. I would also like to acknowledge the 2022 performance report and MI 2023 work plan.

I recognize the need for the joint monitoring committee for the implementation of the MI Strategy Plan 2021-2025. This is to ensure that MI's mission can meet the needs of Greater Mekong Subregion, in particular in the post COVID-19 era.

I would like to share with you the 2021 Thailand International Development Cooperation figures, as Thailand has committed to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development from the policy level to implementation process. The Thailand International Cooperation Agency or TICA is designated to play a vital role in partnership for sustainable development for Goal 17 "partnerships to achieve the goal".

In 2021, the total amount of Thailand's official development assistance or ODA amounted to 69.9 million USD. The top countries receiving Thailand's ODA were Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bhutan, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam, respectively. In terms of the thematic focus, Thailand has focused on human security in food, health, jobs, energy, and environment. And our international development cooperation takes the form of short-term training, long-term scholarships, dispatch of Thai experts and Thai volunteers, development projects and provision of equipment.

Next year, our budget for implementation is expected to be reduced, and be nearly one third of what we had received in the past. However, we are still committed to our role by prioritizing the projects and activities that need the most response post COVID-19 to ensure social and economic recovery in our region. We would like to confirm that our cooperation with MI and other partners and donors will continue.

Thank you and I wish you a happy new year.

Mr. Nguyen Viet Ha

Official

Foreign Economic Relations Department

Ministry of Planning and Investment

Hanoi, Viet Nam

I am delighted to join our colleagues from other countries at this meeting today.

I am very happy that the performance of Mekong Institute in 2022 has seen an impressive recovery. The result is good enough to convince member countries of the performance, quality and effectiveness of MI. It is a foundation for MI to join other regional frameworks as well as to expand our cooperation, activities, and our initiatives to other regions and countries.

I do hope that the results we get today will be reported to our Council tomorrow and obtain their approval of the performance in 2022 as well as the approval of the plan for 2023. All of this will help us to achieve our plans for 2023 and 2025 and beyond.

On the occasion of the New Year and Christmas, I would like to wish you all of you good health, success in your career and hope to have a chance to meet in person soon in 2023.

Annex I

Steering Committee Members	
Cambodia	Mr. Hang Suvidhya Deputy Secretary General General Secretariat for Population and Development Ministry of Planning Phnom Penh, Cambodia
The People's Republic of China	Mr. Ke Yousheng Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of China to UNESCAP Embassy of P. R. China Bangkok, Thailand
Lao PDR	Mr. Khamphinh Philakone Deputy Director General Department of Economic Affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs Vientiane, Lao PDR
Myanmar	Ms. Moh Moh Naing Director Foreign Economic Relations Department Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar
Royal Thai Government	Mrs. Arunee Hiam Director Development Promotion and Coordination Division Thailand International Cooperation Agency Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangkok, Thailand
Government of Viet Nam	Mr. Nguyen Viet Ha Official Foreign Economic Relations Department Ministry of Planning and Investment
Mekong Institute	Mr. Rithy Buth Director Finance and Operations Department
	Mr. Madhurjya k. Dutta Director Trade & Investment Facilitation Department Coordinator
Meeting Secretariat	
Mekong Institute	Mr. Halimur Rahman MEL Specialist Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Department
	Ms. Pornwilai Pumira Partnership and Resource Mobilization Manager
	Ms. Anusara Tanpitak Communications and Knowledge Management
	Ms. Jian Wang Sustainable Energy and Environment Department Program Manager
	Ms. Wasana Laochai Executive Secretary
	Mr. Narathip Dahan IT Support Team

	Ms. Thitiporn Rattanatraisri Communications Assistant Communications and Knowledge Management Department
	Ms. Vanthone Syyaphone Program Officer on Secondment