

Summary of Preliminary Findings of the Mid-term Review of the GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022 and Indicative Elements of the Hanoi Action Plan 2018-2022

I. Mid-term Review of GMS SF-II

1. The vision and goals of the GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022 (GMS SF-II) were carried over from the GMS Strategic Framework 2002-2012 (GMS SF-I), but the strategies were refined and there was greater selectivity and prioritization of focus areas within sectors. The GMS SF-II also called for a stronger spatial orientation through an expanded concept of economic corridors to include urban development, a multisectoral approach for greater synergy and more efficient resource allocation, and a continued focus on software dimensions including institutions and policies. A brief overview of the GMS SF-II is in *Annex A*.

2. Following the directive of the GMS Ministers, a Mid-Term Review of the GMS SF-II (MTR) was conducted. The findings of the MTR informs the preparations of an Action Plan (the Hanoi Action Plan or HAP) which aims to chart the direction of the GMS Program in the remaining five years of GMS SF-II.

3. The MTR focused on the five assessment areas: (i) the continued relevance of the GMS SF-II strategies in supporting national priorities; (ii) the consistency (or fit) between overall strategy, sector/program strategies and projects; (iii) project cycle processes; (iv) implementation performance; and (v) institutional performance. The major findings are presented below.

A. GMS SF-II Overall Strategy Relevance to the National Development Agenda

4. **The GMS strategic thrusts continue to be relevant to the national development agenda.** Although national development strategies have evolved in terms of focus and priorities since the formulation of the GMS SF-II in 2012, there remains a broad convergence between country priorities and the GMS strategic thrusts which provides a role for all sectors.

5. **Among the GMS sectors and areas of cooperation, transport and economic corridor development (ECD) were considered by the GMS countries to be the most beneficial,** and it is in this sector/area where the countries have registered the most number of projects in the Regional Investment Framework (RIF).

6. **GMS countries continue to attach importance to regional cooperation and integration (RCI)** as an important component of their development strategy as they seek to industrialize and diversify their economies and integrate with regional and global value chains. It is in this context that the GMS Program's focus on ECD and connectivity to gateways and hubs becomes a strategic priority for the countries. ASEAN cooperation is considered the most important RCI program among the GMS-5¹ countries.

B. Consistency between Overall GMS Strategy, Sector/Program Strategies and Projects

7. **Alignment of overall GMS SF with sector strategies. On the whole, the GMS SF-II strategies and sector strategies are aligned, but some sector strategies (transport,**

¹ GMS-5 refers to Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam who are also members of ASEAN.

agriculture, environment and tourism) need to be refined to reflect new elements in successor plans. These refinements would be reflected in the HAP. In the case of HRD, transport and trade facilitation (TTF), and information and communications technology (ICT), future strategies would depend on the resolution of institutional issues.

8. **Alignment of sector strategies and priorities with programs/projects in the RIF.** The RIF programs and projects were consistent with sector priorities for the most part, but some important sector priorities have not been addressed. Sector priorities that have been strongly supported by projects include:

- In transport, road alignments with the economic corridors and links to gateways;
- In energy, regional power integration and interconnection;
- In agriculture, agribusiness centers in corridors, and agriculture supply chains;
- In HRD, health subsector, communicable disease control;
- In urban development and other multisector/border economic zones, widening economic corridors and multisector linkages; and
- In tourism, tourism-related infrastructure in economic corridors.

9. Important gaps are in the areas of multimodal transport, particularly rail links; trade logistics; renewable energy and energy efficiency; traffic rights arrangements and coordinated border management, among others. The section on implementation performance provides more details.

C. Project Cycle Processes

10. **Planning time frames.** Sector frameworks were not in sync with the timeframe of the overall GMS strategic framework. Conceptually, the planning cycle starts from the vision statement which shapes the overall program goals and strategies, and broad directions for each sector. The sectors then carry these forward through more detailed strategies, action plans and projects. In the case of the GMS SF-II, this sequence was not strictly observed.

- The transport, agriculture, environment and tourism strategies were carried over from GMS SF-I and ended in 2015 or earlier; their successor plans are in various stages of final preparation/endorsement.
- Except for the agriculture, environment and energy strategy frameworks, which will end in 2022, coinciding with GMS SF-II, the end-year of other sector strategies, vary (i.e. 2020, 2025, and 2030).

11. **Programming and prioritization.** The processes and methodology of the RIF have a number of weaknesses that has limited its usefulness as a source of information on the progress of cooperation under GMS SF-II. These weaknesses include the following:

- The “availability of financing” criterion, as a basis for prioritization skews the sectoral composition of projects in the RIF-Implementation Plan (RIF-IP);
- The RIF contains a mix of programs and projects, but both are given a count of one each;
- The RIF-IP may have limited usefulness in generating funds from development partners or the private sector since projects included (prioritized) are those that already have identified sources of financing;
- The RIF only covers planned or proposed projects; it does not include projects that were ongoing at the start of GMS SF-II;

- In some sectors (TTF, HRD, Urban Development and TAs for Special Economic Zones), only ADB-funded projects were included and the RIF does not cover projects or activities supported by other Development Partners within the GMS Framework.

12. **Monitoring and evaluation.** Despite the emphasis given in GMS SF-II, **the monitoring and evaluation framework has not been implemented uniformly across the various sectors.** The agriculture, environment and tourism sectors have relatively well-developed monitoring and evaluation systems and results were used in the formulation of successor plans. The MTR experience has made it apparent that the paucity of good information has limited the opportunity to gain insights that could improve on future initiatives. It has also limited the potential for evidence-based planning and strategy formulation.

D. Implementation Performance

1. Overall performance of RIF projects

13. **The implementation performance of RIF projects is low.** RIF implementation performance covered project completion, project commencement (including for feasibility studies), and resource mobilization. As of June 30, 2016, the RIF 2020 reported 2 completed investment projects (out of 68), both in the transport sector, and 3 technical assistance projects (out of 32). The low level of completion rates may be explained by the long gestation periods, especially of investment projects. Moreover, ongoing projects at the start of GMS SF-II have not been included; only planned or proposed projects were covered by the project calls.

14. The share of investment projects that have commenced implementation in RIF-IP 2014-2018 and RIF 2020 are 36% and 26%, respectively. Of the 18 investment projects that have commenced implementation as of 30 June 2016, 13 are in the transport sector. Feasibility studies commenced for another 18 projects (26%), 14 of which are also in the transport sector. More than half of the projects in RIF 2020 have available financing.

2. Sector assessments and reviews

15. Because of the limitations of the RIF as a source of project information, sector mid-term reviews and sector assessments, where available, were examined to obtain a better picture of the sector's implementation performance. The highlights of the sector assessments and reviews are provided below.

a. Transport

16. Based on the Initial Review of the Transport Sector Strategy 2006-2015 (TrSS), conducted in 2014, **road sector projects have registered good performance, while progress in the rail and inland waterways subsectors have lagged behind.**

17. **The Initial Review also gave an overall successful rating to the attainment of the TrSS' overarching goals, namely:** (i) exploit synergies in the GMS transport system; (ii) move toward an open market for transport services; (iii) facilitate economic efficiency to reduce transport costs; (iv) complete the GMS transport network and improve links with South Asia; and (v) encourage multi-modalism.

18. The initial review of the TrSS also observed that **although indicative guidelines for project selection were provided for the RIF, some projects selected did not adequately**

reflect these guidelines. For instance, a skewed distribution of road projects was observed, with Lao PDR, the smallest GMS country, accounting for 40% of RIF road projects. Some of the selected projects appeared to have been selected unduly based on national, geopolitical, or other considerations.²

b. Economic Corridor Development

19. A Study on *Revisiting the Greater Mekong Subregion Corridor Strategies and Action Plans* conducted in 2015 reported that the **strategy and action plans (SAPs) of three GMS economic corridors (East West Economic Corridor, North South Economic Corridor, and Southern Economic Corridor) were implemented up to at least 70%**. Road and bridge projects are progressing very well and so are tourism infrastructure projects. Some gaps were noted however, in the implementation of transport and trade facilitation measures.

20. **Although the GMS SF-II's core strategy focused on economic corridor development, the RIF does not present project information from an economic corridor or spatial perspective.** Projects located in the GMS economic corridors are reported either under the different sectors, urban development or other multisector projects/border economic zones. It is therefore difficult to ascertain based on the RIF, the progress that has been made in the GMS priority corridors segments, or its influence areas.

c. Energy³

21. **Progress in setting up an integrated grid and regional power market has been slow.** GMS countries have reached Stage 1 involving bilateral power interconnections and are moving to Stage 2 on grid-to-grid power interconnection--with limited progress. Several constraints need to be addressed to accelerate Stage 2, including the resolution of hosting issues for the Regional Power Coordination Center (RPCC).

22. **There is limited potential for GMS collaboration in gas and oil.** There is no progress under the GMS framework in terms of gas connectivity since cooperation in these areas are effectively being pursued under the ASEAN framework, namely the trans-ASEAN gas pipeline, and the ASEAN Council on Petroleum.

23. **The approach to energy efficiency (EE) and demand side management and energy conservation needs to be revisited.** At the ASEAN level, national EE action plans are being developed/implemented following ASEAN set targets. EE maybe better pursued at the ASEAN level.

24. **Renewable energy development needs to be re-examined.** At present, only a number of small-scale off grid and grid connected RE projects and feasibility studies have been implemented. The value-addition of the GMS RE cooperation will have to be re-examined beyond the large volumes of hydropower being exported from Lao PDR to Thailand.

25. **No significant progress has been made in promoting clean coal technologies at the GMS level** most likely because of technical constraints in adopting new technologies in carbon capture and storage.

² ADB. 2014. Initial Review of the Greater Mekong Subregion Transport Sector Strategy. Manila.

³ The assessment on energy was based on the focus group discussion on energy held on 11 May 2017 as part of the MTR exercise.

d. Agriculture

26. **Implementation performance of Core Agriculture Support Program II (CASP 2) has been noteworthy, with ADB and other development partners collaborating to provide technical and financial support.** Four ADB TAs, three of which have been completed, provided support to the different CASP 2 pillars. The completed TAs have been rated as successful in delivering targeted outputs. The TAs have successfully piloted grass-roots schemes such as the participatory guarantee systems (PGSs); promoted letters of agreement or LOAs among farmers to promote climate-friendly and gender sensitive agronomic practices; conducted value chains studies for low-input rice, fruits and vegetables and livestock; implemented pilot projects in biomass for bio-energy, and adopted the value chain approach in promoting safe and agriculture-friendly agriculture products (SEAP) which is the current focus of the Strategy and Action Plan for Promoting Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-based Value Chains in the GMS 2018-2022 (SAP).

e. Environment

27. **The implementation performance of CEP 2 as a whole indicated mixed results,** based on the mid-term review of ADB TA 7987-REG: Core Environment Program and Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative in the GMS Phase II or CEP 2, conducted in March 2015. The Program was assessed as relevant and likely sustainable but less effective in its engagement at the strategic and policy levels, and less than efficient in terms of outputs produced relative to inputs.

28. **CEP 2 was actively involved in addressing cross-cutting issues and promoting multisectoral collaboration.** It provided technical support interventions in support of social inclusiveness and poverty reduction goals and collaborated with GMS working groups in tools and models application, strategy formulation, awareness raising, knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, sector and country diagnostics, and project design.

f. Human Resource Development⁴

29. **Implementation performance of projects under the Human Resource Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2013-2017 (SFAP) indicated mixed results.** It was reported that out of the 22 planned activities, 7 demonstrated regional progress as planned; 6 demonstrated some progress at the country level; and 9 demonstrated no progress.

30. **Among the seven strategic thrusts of the SFAP, the most significant progress was manifested under regional health issues** in the areas of communicable disease control and strengthening resilience to climate change in the health sector.

31. **Projects in the education subsector focusing on technical and vocational training and education (TVET) were predominantly national,** rather than regional in orientation as governments develop TVET institutions based on the skills needed by their respective labor markets.

32. **GMS cooperation in higher education is happening under the wider framework of ASEAN.** There is evidence of demand for expanding cooperation in higher education but in the

⁴ The assessment was based on the Implementation Review of the HRD Strategic Framework and Action Plan conducted in April 2017.

wider context of ASEAN through the ASEAN frameworks on quality assurance and mutual recognition.

33. No progress has been made in the areas of labor migration and mitigation of the social costs of GMS economic corridor development.

g. Urban Development and Other Multisector/Border Economic Zones

34. A number of ongoing urban development projects are located in the GMS economic corridors. A preliminary list of priority border points have also been identified, and it has been recommended to prepare spatial plans for these areas on both sides of the border, similar to urban development spatial frameworks. Many of these border points are located along the GMS economic corridors.

h. Tourism

35. Overall, the projects are well aligned with the sector priorities. Investment projects focused on tourism-related infrastructure and supply chain services, while TAs focused on institution and capacity building.

i. Transport and trade facilitation

36. Activities under the four core areas of the TTF-AP 2015-2017 have made good progress, namely:

- Customs modernization through RKC implementation, IT adoption and partnership with private sector. Implementation of RKC-standard Customs reforms, together with Customs IT systems and simplification and standardization of Customs documents.
- Coordinated border management with risk-based control. Initial application of risk management; accreditation schemes for compliant traders; and launching of single stop/single window inspection for goods traffic at selected border crossing points; and
- Enhancing SPS arrangements for GMS trade. Mapping of current business processes of export and import clearance for SPS products; capacity building on risk management, compliance, and IT support for Customs; surveillance and inspection programs for plant health, animal health, and food safety; education levels and university training of SPS specialists; harmonization for SPS measures and practices; and strengthened food safety capacities of private food handling enterprises.

j. Information and communications technology (ICT)

37. Goal attainment was hampered by lack of progress and absence of a coherent and updated ICT strategy. An updated ICT sector strategy was supposed to be developed as successor to the 2011 Strategic Framework for ICT Development (SFID) but no new strategy is in place. To date, no significant progress has been achieved in the areas for cooperation set out in the 2011 SFID except for the Information Superhighway Network (ISN).

38. Majority of the ICT projects in the RIF did not report any progress. However, the new focus on e-commerce cooperation has registered achievements in terms of alliances with the private sector and other stakeholders, GMS mobile applications, establishment of a website with training, trading and networking platforms, cooperation agreements between enterprises, and capacity building, among others.

E. Institutional Performance

1. GMS Program's strengths and weaknesses

39. The **strengths of the GMS Program** as perceived by the GMS countries are the pragmatic focus on connectivity; ADB's role as central secretariat and lead financier; and systematic and well-structured mechanisms. The **GMS Program's perceived weaknesses** are: weak synergy and complementarity of GMS programs and projects; lack of financial and technical support for some sectors; less than effective working groups; and weak monitoring and evaluation systems.

2. Effectiveness of Working Groups/Forums

40. **The effectiveness levels of working groups vary.**⁵ Effective working groups/forums are in transport, agriculture, environment and tourism sectors; also the Regional Power Trade Coordination Committee (RPTCC); less effective are those in HRD and TTF. The Trade Facilitation Working Group (TFWG), Subregional Investment Working Group (SIWG), Subregional Telecommunications Forum (STF) and Subregional Energy Forum (SEF) have been inactive. There is a need to revisit inactive/less effective working groups with the view to reactivating them and/or rationalizing their functions.

3. Partnerships with, community-based groups, private business sector and development partners

41. **There is encouraging evidence that partnerships with stakeholders, including community-based groups, have been incorporated in project interventions in some sectors,** notably in agriculture, environment, trade facilitation and tourism.

42. **The establishment of the GMS Freight Transport Association (FRETA) is a successful attempt of the GMS Business Council to facilitate the participation of private sector in the GMS Program.** However, GMS Business Council (GMS-BC) has not been sustainable due to lack of resources. But there is **evidence that demand driven private-sector activities can be effective as demonstrated by the GMS Business Alliance established under the e-Commerce platform** whose accomplishments included a mobile application on "The GMS Cross-border Logistic Information Platform"; establishment of a website which includes incubation, training and trading platforms; signing of cooperation agreements by e-commerce enterprises; and capacity building and training activities.

43. **Development partners have played an increasingly important role in the GMS Program as evidenced by their active participation at the Development Partners Forum** held as part of the GMS Ministerial Conferences as well as, and more importantly, **at the level of WGs** in the agriculture, environment, tourism and to a lesser extent, transport and trade facilitation sectors.

44. **A new governance framework for the GMS Program may be considered to mark and affirm the Program's maturity on its 25th year.** The new framework envisages the empowerment of the national secretariat to assume a bigger role in the management of the GMS Program, greater flexibility in configuring working groups depending on the specific circumstances of the sectors, and engaging with the private sector along industry lines. The

⁵ Based on the Study on Strengthening the GMS Institutional Framework. ADB. 2016.

new governance framework will need to consider: (i) the different levels of technical and management competencies in various sectors and capacities in each country; (ii) skills gaps and the recommended capacity development interventions; and (iii) resource availability (financial and staff resources), mindful that GMS countries have different levels of economic development and vary in terms of their regional cooperation priorities.

II. Indicative Elements of the Hanoi Action Plan (HAP) 2018-2022

45. The HAP serves as a strategic document and at the same time a planning framework to guide project development and programming from 2018-2022. It fulfills the same role envisaged for the RIF when it was originally conceived at the time of the GMS SF-II formulation.

46. The development of the HAP involves: (i) refining the GMS SF-II strategies; (ii) enhancing project cycle processes primarily through the RIF improvements; and (iii) reviewing the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms towards a new governance framework for the GMS Program.

47. The HAP refines the strategic approach of GMS SF-II in the next five years through:

- enhancing spatial orientation through the preparation of master plans for urban areas and secondary towns under the expanded concept of economic corridors, or border areas, to provide a more solid foundation from which to base investment decisions;
- enhancing the multisector approach, particularly in urban development, implying not only investments in urban infrastructure (transport, power, water and sanitation), but also to the mix of hardware and software or policy issues that could arise from urbanization (e.g. health impacts of pollution and food safety), climate change (e.g. food security and disaster preparedness), as well as the institutional and policy initiatives needed to stimulate private sector engagement;
- balancing external connectivity with domestic connectivity, through rural-urban links which support emerging strategies in developing food value chains, and developing secondary destinations in tourism; and
- continuing to focus on software issues, for instance, in providing greater focus on Customs and SPS interventions that may not be covered under the CBTA, and linking them to coordinated border management in the economic corridors.

48. Adjustments in sector strategies and operational priorities based on successor strategic frameworks, as well as specific action points on process improvements and institutional mechanisms are detailed in the Annex to the HAP (which also appears as *Annex B* in this summary).

Annex A
The GMS Strategic Framework 2012-2022: An Overview

1. The GMS Strategic Framework 2011-2022 (GMS SF-II) was endorsed at the 17th GMS Ministerial Meeting in August 2011 and adopted at the 4th GMS Summit in the same year. It succeeded the first 10-year GMS Strategic Framework 2002-2012 (GMS SF-I) which came 10 years after the establishment of the GMS Program in 1992. The GMS SF- I marked the growing complexity of the GMS Program as it ventured into more challenging areas compared to the more cautious approach of the GMS Program’s first 10 years. When GMS SF-II was formulated, the momentum for ASEAN economic integration was at its height, providing impetus for the GMS countries to accelerate trade and investment liberalization, and take advantage of opportunities in an expanding regional market. Market connectivity was paramount as GMS countries focused on linking with Asia’s most vibrant economies through regional cooperation.

2. The GMS SF-II reaffirmed that the vision and goals of GMS SF-I remained relevant (Box 1) and that it would build on progress made in previous years in order to bring cooperation to the next level. To do this, the following six-pronged approach will be pursued:

- **greater focus on software** to complement the continued focus on hardware;
- **greater selectivity and prioritization of focus areas within sectors**, including less emphasis on information sharing and a greater focus on decision making on issues that are clearly regional in nature;
- **closer link to the broader regional integration agenda**, leading to more clarity on which regional issues should be covered by the GMS Program and which ones are better left to other regional organizations;
- **more attention on the linkages across different sectors**;
- **rebalancing resources without changing the broad sector focus of the program** and bearing in mind organizational capacities and the potential for achieving real results across the sectors; and
- **stronger and more effective emphasis on monitoring results** and on other improvements in program implementation that will help enhance its overall effectiveness and impact.

Box 1. Goals of the GMS SF II

Goals of GMS Strategic Framework II

- Strengthening infrastructure linkages
- Facilitating cross-border trade and investment, and tourism
- Enhancing private sector participation and competitiveness
- Developing human resources
- Protecting the environment and promoting sustainable use of shared natural resources

3. The GMS SF-II adopted as its core strategy, a spatial orientation that expands the concept of an economic corridor beyond its role as a transport and transit route. Under this expanded concept, the approach to developing economic corridors would include: (i) urban development to widen the corridor space for connecting markets and exploiting agglomeration effects; (ii) development of special economic zones (SEZs) and industrial parks at the borders and along corridors as a vehicle for private sector investment; and (iii) development of transport and logistics services to enhance links with trade gateways and making markets function more efficiently. These comprised the “second generation” investments envisaged under the GMS SF-II.

4. The GMS SF-II also reflected refinements in sector strategic thrusts:

- In transport, with major road links in place, multimodal systems would be developed, especially between road and rail; rail transport would be a new area of focus aimed at

connecting all countries to a GMS rail network by 2020; other new areas would also include the development of airports and seaports.

- In energy, the strategy has been expanded to enhance access to electricity by all sectors, particularly the poor; promote the use of indigenous and renewable energy; improve energy supply and security and promote private sector participation in energy investments;
- In agriculture, the focus would be on modernizing agricultural trade and food safety which are important for integrating into value chains;
- In tourism, the focus would remain to be in human resources development (HRD), sustainable tourism and sustainable product development, focusing more directly on segments of the Mekong River tourism corridor to underscore the complementary objective of promoting a single tourist destination.
- In human resources, cooperation would focus on harmonizing regulations, standards, policies and procedures in the areas of education and skills development to promote mobility of skilled labor, as well as promoting safe labor migration; and
- In environment, climate change effects mitigation and adaptation measures would be applied in transport, agriculture, energy and tourism initiatives; climate change considerations would also underpin the important goal of food security.

5. The GMS SF-II also sought greater selectivity and prioritization of focus areas within sectors, improved clarity on the regional issues to be covered by the GMS program and other regional programs, more attention to links across different sectors, and sharper focus on monitoring results and improvements that enhance the program's effectiveness and impact.

Annex B
The Hanoi Action Plan 2018-2022

Sector Operational Priorities	Description/Key Actions
Transport (Transport Sector Strategy .. is still in the process of formulation; entries are indicative)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade and expand road networks along GMS economic corridors • Establish railway network in 2020 • Upgrade and develop ports and inland waterways • Upgrade and expand air transport connectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete “missing links”, improve “weak links” in the economic corridors and upgrade road links to primary ports and airports • Enhance and/or establish rail connectivity between Cambodia and Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam, PRC and Viet Nam, and PRC and Lao PDR • Develop and increase capacity of major deep sea ports, promote use of coastal shipping and inland waterways for international trade • Develop secondary airports
Energy (based on the Energy Sector Strategy in GMS SF 2012-2022 and the Regional Power Trade Operation Agreement, RPTOA)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 1: Bilateral cross-border connections • Stage 2: Grid-to-grid power trading between any pair of GMS countries • Stage 3: Most GMS countries with multiple seller–buyer regulatory frameworks • Stage 4: Fully integrated GMS regional competitive power market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) • Develop transmission links dedicated to cross border trading • Use transmission facilities of a third regional country • Harmonize standards and grid codes • Develop multiple seller-buyer regulatory frameworks • Implement a wholly competitive regional market
Agriculture (based on the Strategy and Action Plan for Promoting Safe and Environment-friendly Agro-based Value Chains in the GMS 2018-2022 which is in final stages or preparation for endorsement)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop harmonized standards, practices and policies to facilitate production, trade, and investment in SEAP value chains • Strengthen infrastructure for regionally integrated SEAP value chains • Improve systems for generating and sharing knowledge and innovations • Develop marketing approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonize standards, practices, and policies • Identify and disseminate good practices in SEAP • Formulate and adopt policies on SEAP • Develop agro-industrial zones and agro-demonstration parks • Develop border livestock disease control zones • Establish SPS facilities • Develop agribusiness incubators in the GMS • Develop and strengthen research and extension network • Develop and strengthen regional training and demonstration centers • Develop and strengthen regional education and capacity building network • Develop information sharing platform • Undertake marketing activities • Promote the development of food geographical indications • Develop a communication plan
Environment (based on Core Environment Program (CEP) Strategic Framework 2018-2022 which is in final stages or preparation for endorsement)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen regional collaboration and management of shared natural capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate governance and dialogue processes • Support cooperation and intensified co-

Sector Operational Priorities	Description/Key Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> management of shared natural capital in transboundary landscapes • Implement knowledge sharing activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and knowledge management support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build environmental performance monitoring and assessment capacity • Develop databases • Develop and apply decision support tools • Establish knowledge management system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy advice and technical support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide environmental policy, planning and safeguards support • Develop plans and investments targeting economic corridors and SEZs • Promote ecosystem services-based approach • Strengthen climate change risk and vulnerability assessment capacity • Promote uptake of low carbon technologies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance and investment services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project preparation • Develop regional pipeline • Develop innovative financing mechanisms
Human Resource Development (the results of the WGHRD Meeting on 4-5 July will update this section)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Health</i>: establish a GMS Working Group on Health Cooperation (WGHC) that will focus on cross-border health issues and communicable disease control • <i>Education</i>: pursue initiatives within the ASEAN framework rather than through the GMS • <i>Labor Migration</i>: explore establishing Working Group on Safe Labor Migration for knowledge sharing and addressing regional issues • <i>Social Development</i>: integrate cross-cutting social development issues into appropriate projects 	
Urban Development and Other Multisector/Border Economic Zones (results of the WGUD meeting will update/revise this section to reflect 3-year rolling pipeline)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on urban systems as part of spatial planning for economic corridors • Develop regional and holistic approaches in urban spatial strategies • Develop criteria or approaches for selecting cities and towns • Develop data resources • Promote a multi-sector approach in corridor towns development • Establish multi-level institutional framework for coordination, planning and implementation • Promote knowledge sharing 	
Tourism (based on Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2025 which is in final stages for endorsement)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop human resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement regional skills standard • Capacity building for public officials • Strengthen tourism enterprise services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve tourism infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade airports • Establish road access in secondary destinations • Develop green urban infrastructure services • Improve river and marine passenger ports • Expand the transnational railway system
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance visitor experience and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create integrated spatial and thematic destination plans • Develop thematic multi-country experience • Implement common tourism standards • Facilitate investment in secondary destinations • Prevent negative social and environmental impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake creative marketing and promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote thematic multi-country experiences and events • Position GMS as a must-visit destination in Asia

Sector Operational Priorities	Description/Key Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen public-private marketing arrangements Enhance market research and data exchange Raise awareness about tourism opportunities and sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate regional travel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate implementation of air services agreements Address tourist visa policy gaps Improve border facilities management
Transport and Trade Facilitation (based on TTF-AP but subject to further discussions/revisions by the TFWG if and when reactivated)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customs modernization through RKC implementation, IT adoption and partnership with private sector Simplification and standardization of trade documents based on international trade standards, and strengthened coordination across agencies Enhancements in coordinated border management Enhancing SPS arrangements for GMS trade 	
ICT (based on Strategic Framework for ICT Development in the GMS with suggestions for Strengthening E-Commerce Platform but ICT priority in remaining years of the SF needs to be reexamined)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging the digital divides, fostering innovations, promoting ICT applications (e.g. in health, tourism, agriculture, education, etc), encouraging green ICT, and developing human resources GMS E-commerce Cooperation Platform cooperation can include: enhancing policy support and advocacy, strengthening institutional structures, information sharing (database and consumer markets), better policy coordination, setting up support services and capacity development 	
Process Improvements	Description/Key Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define planning cycle for the GMS and synchronize planning timeframes for Program-wide and sector strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt interim measures (e.g. through action plans with shorter timeframes) until all sectors are fully synchronized
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute improvements in the programming process through the RIF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include expanded coverage, revised set of criteria, information to be included, institutional responsibilities and reporting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement monitoring and evaluation systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement monitoring and evaluation systems at the sector level, taking into account, the common framework prescribed in GMS SF-II
Enhanced Institutional Mechanisms	Description/Key Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct pilot schemes and scale up successful models of innovative partnership arrangements (e.g. with communities, grass-roots organizations farmers, small and medium enterprises, local governments) as a means to enhance project implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, and disseminate information and awareness on, successful partnership models for possible replication or scaling up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepen engagement with the private sector through industry focused coordination mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate consultations with industry players on the concept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance engagement with Development Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deepen engagement at WG level; feature Development Partner initiatives in the RIF
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a new governance mechanism that empowers the GMS countries to assume greater responsibilities for the GMS Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore various options for the new governance framework as a starting point for building consensus