

GMS COOPERATION FRAMEWORK ON DIGITALIZATION OF TRADE DOCUMENTS

1. Background

We, members of the Task Force on Trade and Investment of The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) (hereafter “the Members”), reaffirm our commitments to the GMS Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030, the GMS Digital Economy Cooperation Initiative and the Initiative on International Trade and Economic Cooperation Framework for Digital Economy and Green Development.

We recognize that the development of digital technologies has transformed international trade and the ways trade is managed and regulated. We acknowledge the progress GMS members have made in carrying out cooperation in various areas of digital economy, and desire to further enhance trade and investment facilitation by promoting the application of digitalization of trade documents, which will streamline trade procedures, reduce cost of trade and create new trade and investment opportunities in the region.

We acknowledge that Members are at different levels of digital development, thus there is a need to focus GMS cooperation on overcoming the digital divides, ensuring shared benefits of digitalization and addressing challenges.

We emphasize the need to strengthen practical cooperation in promoting application of digitalized trade documents, in order to accelerate the process and tap the potential of trade digitalization for sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development of GMS region and ensure that no one is left behind in the era of digital economy.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this Cooperation Framework are to:

- a. work to explore the benefit of establishing a modern and mutually beneficial cooperation platform to foster a friendly environment for encouraging digitalization of trade documents with the view to contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development in GMS region;



- b. enhance the cooperation in trade digitalization, including digitalization of trade documents¹, digital infrastructure, digital platforms and standards, seizing market opportunities, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the GMS region;
- c. accelerate the process of trade digitalization through encouraging application of digitalized trade documents and carrying out relevant pilot projects as jointly identified and agreed by Members.

3. Principles

1. The cooperation among the Members shall be on an open and equitable basis and subject to their domestic laws, regulations and respective international obligations of the Members, and the readiness in terms of capacity and infrastructure as well as existing procedures of the GMS Program.
2. The cooperation among the Members shall be in a voluntary, flexible manner, in areas of mutual interest through bilateral, multilateral and collective actions.
3. The Members shall encourage engagement of multiple-stakeholder from but not limited to the Members, and mobilize resources via various channels to support cooperation.
4. The Members shall encourage cooperation among business entities of each Member, taking into account respective Member's readiness in terms of capacities, regulation and infrastructure, including carrying out pilot projects.
5. This Cooperation Framework is without prejudice to Member's domestic laws and regulations, as well as its positions or obligations under other international forum and instruments.

4. Areas of Cooperation

The Members shall endeavor to enhance cooperation on the following areas:

1. Strengthen policy and regulatory exchange, enhance information and experience sharing, encourage digital innovations and conduct capacity building in the areas of

¹ For greater certainty, trade documents may refer to both documents used in commercial cross-border trading activities between the Members' businesses and administrative trade documents between Members.



digitalization of trade documents, with a view to gradually minimize barriers to the cooperation of trade digitalization.

2. Encourage cooperation in digital infrastructure based on respective priorities, and in accordance with respective Member's policies, laws and regulations, to advance digital connectivity and narrow the digital divide to lay solid foundation for development of trade digitalization.
3. Encourage development and application of digitalization of trade documents in the areas where applicable and in accordance with its readiness in terms of capacity, regulations and infrastructure.
4. Consider encouraging cooperation among platforms to facilitate digitalization of trade documents, where possible and applicable, to support relevant stakeholders to better participate in the development of trade digitalization.
5. Explore the possibility of establishment of cooperation network for multiple stakeholders to develop capacity building activities, among others, to facilitate the development of trade digitalization of the Members.
6. Consider encouraging the cooperation on carrying out pilot projects in application of digitalization of trade documents, encourage and take effective measures to guide business entities to use digitalized trade documents through workshop and capacity building, etc.
7. Encourage cooperation on relevant international standards regarding trade digitalization, where applicable, to facilitate the application of digitalized trade documents.
8. Encourage cooperation and dialogue among public and private sectors including but not limited to governmental agencies, enterprises, academic/research institutions and think tanks.
9. Other areas that the Members deem necessary and appropriate and jointly agreed, taking into account respective Member's readiness in terms of capacity, regulations and infrastructure.



5. Implementation

1. The GMS Working Group on Trade and Investment shall undertake the function of implementing the Cooperation Framework, endeavor to use the same focal points under the Working Group. The GMS Secretariat shall provide administrative support for the Working Group to perform the above function.
2. The Working Group on Trade and Investment shall fulfill the following functions:
 - a. to consider any matter relating to the implementation and operation of this Cooperation Framework, and promote cooperation that are listed in Areas of Cooperation;
 - b. coordinate and mobilize resources to support the efforts to implement this Cooperation Framework;
 - c. to consider any proposal to amend this Cooperation Framework;
 - d. to report to GMS Senior Officials' Meeting and share information in Economic Corridors Forum;
 - e. to carry out any other function as the Members deem appropriate.
3. The GMS Secretariat shall:
 - a. work as the convenor for implementing the Cooperation Framework and invite interested Party to be co-chair where appropriate;
 - b. provide support for administrative matters of the Working Group and its regular meetings on implementing the Cooperation Framework;
 - c. coordinate and foster cooperation with relevant research institutions and enterprises to support the cooperation of digitalization of trade documents among the Members;
 - d. provide support with fair and equitable treatment among Members, where appropriate, for development and implementation of pilot projects regarding digitalization of trade documents.

