REFLECTIONS FROM THE GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF

COMMIT

COORDINATED MEKONG MINISTERIAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRAFFICKING
REFLECTIONS FROM THE GREATER MEKONG SUB-REGION
COMMIT - A unique mechanism that brings together the six governments of the Greater Mekong Sub-region in a joint effort to fight human trafficking.

Human trafficking constitutes one of the gravest forms of human rights abuses, whereby people are deceived or coerced into severe forms of exploitation. The Asia-Pacific region records an estimated 11.7 million people in conditions of forced labour, by far the highest figure of any region in the world. Within Asia-Pacific, the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS: Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam) features some of the most extensive flows of migration, forced labour and human trafficking. Trafficking occurs in this region for a wide range of purposes, including sexual exploitation, forced marriage, and forced labour in the fishing and seafood industries, in manufacturing, agriculture, construction, domestic servitude and begging.

The strong cross-border dynamics of human trafficking patterns in the GMS require a coordinated, regional response to the crime.

On 29 October 2004, the six GMS governments signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding against trafficking in persons, vowing to work together in a more effective manner by addressing the need for multi-lateral, bilateral, and government-civil society cooperation to fight human trafficking. Furthermore, it committed the governments to a response to human trafficking that meets international standards.

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed by Ministers from each GMS country on 29 October 2004, marked the launch of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking, known as the COMMIT Process.

COMMIT has provided a forum for developing trust and confidence between the countries on the issue of human trafficking, as well as an effective system for the development and implementation of joint activities.

- In each COMMIT country, National COMMIT Taskforces pull together representatives from all relevant ministries such as Ministries of Justice, Ministries of Home Affairs, Ministries of Public Security, and Ministries of Social Affairs, as well as some international and civil society organisations. National COMMIT Taskforces meet on a regular basis in each country and as such, they provide a crucial forum to promote a multi-disciplinary response to trafficking in persons.
• At the regional level, COMMIT Task Forces come together at least twice a year in meetings where they are brought to account by each other. These meetings are convened by the United Nations Action for Cooperation Against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT), a regional, UNDP-led anti-trafficking project which acts as the secretariat to the COMMIT Process.

• COMMIT Senior Officials Meetings (SOM) are held annually as a forum for peer review where the GMS government officials report to each other on the implementation of efforts made under the COMMIT Process over the past year, and establish goals for the future.

• COMMIT Inter-Ministerial Meetings (IMM) are held every three years, where responsible Ministers from each country provide overall guidance to the COMMIT Process, reaffirm their commitment to the goals of COMMIT as presented in the COMMIT MOU, and officially endorse future COMMIT Sub-Regional Plans of Action.

COMMIT - Championing real progress in counter-trafficking

The COMMIT Process has achieved major progress in counter-trafficking efforts in the GMS over the past decade. It has been hailed as a global best practice for regional cooperation to combat human trafficking. COMMIT has increased mutual understanding of trafficking in the six member countries through the sharing of lessons learned and made the countries more pro-active through positive peer pressure. In addition, it has provided better access to governments for both civil society and donors to discuss the issue of human trafficking.

Consecutive Sub-regional Plans of Action (SPAs) adopted by the governments, combined with national plans and supporting bilateral cooperation, have fuelled COMMIT’s progress.

• SPA I: 2005-2007
• SPA II: 2008-2010
• SPA III: 2011-2014
• SPA IV: 2015-2018

SPA IV will be finalised at the 10th SOM on 28-29 April 2015, and formally endorsed and launched by responsible Ministers from the six GMS countries at the 4th IMM on 30 April 2015. SOM 10 and IMM 4 will be held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

This booklet features a compilation of reflections by senior government officials from the GMS, on their respective countries’ experiences as members of COMMIT over the past ten years.

It celebrates a decade of achievements and demonstrates the scale of effort invested in tackling a critical issue through a successful process of regional engagement.

For more information on COMMIT, visit http://no-trafficking.org/commit.html
Human trafficking is a pervasive human rights violation and a deplorable crime. Over the past decade, Cambodians have suffered from the effects of severe human trafficking practices. Cambodian women and children have been trafficked within our country and across its borders for sexual exploitation, while Cambodian men, women and children have been trafficked for labour exploitation. Trafficking flows have involved our neighbouring countries as well as other countries within this region and beyond it.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has been an active member of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) since its inception in 2004, when the COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Yangon, Myanmar. Cambodia is a proud member of this regional process to combat human trafficking, and recognizes that no country or institution can successfully fight this heinous crime alone.

The COMMIT Process is a venue for the Royal Government of Cambodia to join efforts with other countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) to fight trafficking crimes. COMMIT
has contributed significantly to the strengthening of regional cooperation in this field. It has been a positive and constructive process through which the six governments of the GMS countries and their international development partners have been able to come together in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, to fight human trafficking.

Cambodia’s COMMIT Taskforce, under the chairmanship of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs of Cambodia, has embraced the ‘Four Ps’ strategy (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy) and adopted a rights-based approach in order to combat human trafficking more effectively. While each of the ‘Four Ps’ carries equal importance as critical areas to be addressed in the global fight against human trafficking, the Royal Government of Cambodia has prioritized protection and prosecution, as these areas are considered to require greater attention at present in our country.

Human trafficking is a pervasive human rights violation and a deplorable crime. Over the past decade, Cambodians have suffered from the effects of severe human trafficking practices. Cambodian women and children have been trafficked within our country and across its borders for sexual exploitation, while Cambodian men, women and children have been trafficked for labour exploitation. Trafficking flows have involved our neighbouring countries as well as other countries within this region and beyond it.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has been an active member of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) since its inception in 2004, when the COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Yangon, Myanmar. Cambodia is a proud member of this regional process to combat human trafficking, and recognizes that no country or institution can successfully fight this heinous crime alone.

The COMMIT Process is a venue for the Royal Government of Cambodia to join efforts with other countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) to fight trafficking crimes. COMMIT has contributed significantly to the strengthening of regional cooperation in this field. It has been a positive and constructive process through which the six governments of the GMS countries and their international development partners have been able to come together in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, to fight human trafficking.

Cambodia’s COMMIT Taskforce, under the chairmanship of the Ministry of
Women’s Affairs of Cambodia, has embraced the ‘Four Ps’ strategy (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy) and adopted a rights-based approach in order to combat human trafficking more effectively. While each of the ‘Four Ps’ carries equal importance as critical areas to be addressed in the global fight against human trafficking, the Royal Government of Cambodia has prioritized protection and prosecution, as these areas are considered to require greater attention at present in our country.

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs of Cambodia is proud of the achievements made to date under the stewardship of the COMMIT Process. Important goals and tangible results have been reached at both the regional and national levels over the last decade.

Firstly, Cambodia has developed and put in place sound policies at the regional and national level. Three Sub-Regional Plans of Action have been developed and implemented since the signing of the COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding. Bilateral anti-trafficking agreements have been signed between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and the Royal Government of Thailand. These agreements have subsequently been implemented, reviewed and amended.

At the same time, a number of anti-trafficking laws, policies and protocols have been developed and implemented in Cambodia. These include the Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008); the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2011-2013); the Minimum Standard on Protection of the Rights of the Victims of Trafficking (2009); and the Minimum Standard on Residential Care for Victims of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2014).

Secondly, the COMMIT Regional Training Programme has equipped a large number of Cambodian government officials with essential skills to respond to human trafficking. Some officials also received capacity training to become trainers themselves, and have in turn successfully delivered trainings on the ‘Four Ps’ strategy to nearly 1,000 government officials and NGO staff in Cambodia.

Thirdly, the COMMIT Process has brought together networks of young people from each of the six COMMIT member countries to allow them to discuss and share information about human trafficking issues with policy makers and programme managers, in particular at the regional COMMIT Senior Official Meetings and Inter-
Ministerial Meetings. These young people have designed a series of joint activities targeting the youth for implementation in their respective countries. The Royal Government of Cambodia fully supports the continuation of this initiative, as youth engagement is critical in the response to human trafficking. In addition, we believe that participation from victims should be encouraged in both the formulation and implementation of policies and programme aimed at fighting human trafficking.

Fourthly, hundreds of Cambodian victims of human trafficking have been assisted, rescued and repatriated to Cambodia from other countries. A notable recent example (2014) is the case of nine male Cambodians who were repatriated from Saudi Arabia after having travelled abroad for work and suffered from labour exploitation. As Cambodia does not have a diplomatic presence in Saudi Arabia, the Royal Cambodian Government through the COMMIT Task force requested support from the Royal Thai Government to handle this case, which resulted in the nine Cambodian citizens being successfully assisted and repatriated.

Despite these significant advancements and positive results of COMMIT to date, it is very important that COMMIT countries continue strengthening this initiative and improve its effectiveness based on our joint lessons learnt. We must enhance the impact of the ‘Four Ps’ strategy, improve cross-border victim identification and protection, reinforce the prosecution of perpetrators, pay stronger attention to labour-related issues, intensify our engagement with the private sector, and consolidate a framework for monitoring and evaluation. In addition to this, our transnational cooperation needs to be expanded beyond the Greater Mekong Sub-Region in order to target other key regional forums such as ASEAN and the Bali Process.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate the strong commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia to continue strengthening the COMMIT Process and cooperation with its members in order to assist victims more effectively as well as reduce the incidence of human trafficking in Cambodia, in our region and throughout the world.
Hand in hand against human trafficking

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), I would like to offer warm congratulations, on behalf of the Chinese government, to the other COMMIT member countries. Our heartfelt thanks are also extended to the United Nations agencies and staff of COMMIT governments and people’s groups for their consistent care and support provided to the COMMIT framework.

Human trafficking is the focus of widespread concern around the world as it represents a serious violation of human rights. In October 2004, the governments of Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding for Mekong sub-regional cooperation to fight human trafficking, which initiated regional anti-trafficking cooperation among our six countries. Over the next decade, the six governments forged ahead, side by side, in their fight against human trafficking. By continuously strengthening communication among COMMIT members and tackling difficulties and challenges together and head on, we have achieved significant progress. The six COMMIT governments, who come together regularly in bilateral and multilateral meetings, have established multiple border liaison offices, stepped up efforts to crack down on trafficking crimes in an holistic manner, improved the assistance and protection offered...
to victims of trafficking, and effectively safeguarded the legitimate rights and interests of these victims. I believe that this has contributed significantly to the peace, stability and prosperity of our region. Moreover, the COMMIT Process has won recognition from the international community and become a model of regional cooperation against human trafficking on the strength of its unique vitality, and broad and profound impact.

Over the past decade, as a member of the COMMIT Process, the Chinese government has been committed to good-neighbourly friendship as a priority of its foreign policy. It has adhered to the mutually beneficial and win-win principle of unity and cooperation. China took the initiative to strengthen cooperation with other countries in the GMS, thereby contributing to the maturity of the process. Under the COMMIT framework, the Chinese government signed bilateral agreements with neighbouring Myanmar, Viet Nam and Lao PDR, and established eight border liaison offices to facilitate collaboration against cross-border trafficking. A number of joint campaigns against transnational trafficking in persons were also conducted, resulting in effective deterrence of criminals and in a successful curbing of the spread of this heinous crime.

In today’s world, the only effective way to deal with transnational crime is through countries working closely together. The fight against human trafficking is no exception.

To quote an ancient Chinese proverb: it takes ten years to sharpen a sword. As we mark this important 10-year anniversary, the COMMIT Process is on the threshold of a new historical era. I hope the six governments will mark this milestone by seizing the opportunity to institutionalize the COMMIT cooperation mechanism, thereby bringing about leapfrog development in regional cooperation against human trafficking.

The Chinese government is determined to continue to work closely with its regional counterparts to deliver the commitments listed in the COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding and the Joint Declarations, as well as faithfully implement the sub-regional plan of action to make the region’s anti-trafficking cooperation more efficient and practical, and ensure people’s wellbeing, social stability, unity, and prosperity!
On behalf of the Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, I would like to convey my congratulations to all member countries of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) on the occasion of the 10th year anniversary of this Process. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for the establishment of the COMMIT Process in 2004, in Yangon, the Union of Myanmar. The COMMIT Process has become a remarkable alliance that binds together all the countries in the Mekong Sub-region in their collective response to combat human trafficking.

As we all already know, human trafficking is a violation of fundamental human rights of citizens as stipulated in our national constitution and laws, as well as in international conventions. It impacts negatively on the development of our economy, stability and national security and continues to occur in our region and around the globe. For Lao PDR, the main causes that lead to this phenomenon are without doubt poverty, low level of education, limited life skills and vocational skills, including disparities between the levels of development of different countries in the region. Furthermore, rapid development of infrastructure, and access to new communication technologies and free media, have become pull and push factors for
domestic movement and regional migration, typically from rural areas to cities and across borders, in search of a better life. Often, this migration process exposes them to risks of becoming victims of human trafficking.

Throughout the past decade following the establishment of the COMMIT Process, the Governments of COMMIT’s member countries have enjoyed strong and active cooperation in their fight against human trafficking in the region. Since the signing of the COMMIT MOU in 2004, each country has developed and improved its own national mechanisms to effectively collaborate in response to human trafficking at the national and regional levels.

Since becoming a member of COMMIT, Lao PDR has attached great importance to its counter-trafficking work. The Lao government has formed the National Steering Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking as a dedicated anti-trafficking governmental body, which is chaired by his Excellency, the Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR. These structures exist from the central to local level. The Committee cooperates with neighbouring countries, international agencies, as well as with non-governmental and civil society organizations, to actively run projects and activities responding to human trafficking. It also develops related policies and legislation, as well as National Plans of Action (NPA) on countering human trafficking, and provides funding to support the implementation of the NPA.

At the same time, the Lao government has become party to many International Instruments relating to Anti-Human Trafficking, in particular the Human Rights Protocol, the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and Human Rights Treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Domestically, laws and legislations related to the prevention and combating of human trafficking have been enacted and used effectively by the authorities in prosecuting perpetrators of human trafficking, as well as supporting victims of trafficking. In addition, a human trafficking law is currently being drafted and is expected to be ready for approval by the parliament by the end of 2015. With regards to international cooperation, the Lao government also maintains strong collaboration with countries in the region, such as Thailand, Viet Nam and China and other Mekong Sub-
region countries, as well as with ASEAN, including through the Australia-ASEAN cooperation on counter trafficking, and the Bali Process.

With regards to prevention, Lao PDR is considered both a source and transit country for human trafficking. Consequently, it is important to conduct preventive work by pursuing education for everyone, promoting self-awareness and respect of the laws, as well as focusing on awareness-raising on human trafficking in many forms, promoting vocational training in order to improve job opportunities and effectively supporting poverty elimination efforts in order to reduce and eliminate the factors that may lead Lao citizens, in particular women and children, to become vulnerable people who are deceived and lured into human trafficking.

Lao PDR is stepping up efforts to prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking according to the laws. In the last few years, the Lao police and the Prosecutor and Supreme Court have convicted several offenders. In addition, the government has established the hotline number 1300, operated by the Ministry of Public Security, to report cases of human trafficking. Another dedicated hotline number, 1362, operated by the Lao Women’s Union, has been set up for consultation on violence against women.

Regarding the protection of victims, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare as well as Lao Women’s Union (Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children) provide necessary support to victims of trafficking such as shelter, health care, legal support, vocational training and reintegration support.

The achievements of addressing human trafficking mentioned above are based on the unity, hard work, and contribution in both funding and knowledge of the National Steering Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking, the Secretariat and other stakeholders including the support of the neighbouring countries, international agencies, development partners, and NGOs.

Although significant achievements have been made through the COMMIT Process over the past ten years, human trafficking remains highly prevalent in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. I strongly believe that the sound and enduring collaboration between all six governments in the region will make our joint anti-human trafficking efforts more effective.
It is an honour and privilege to celebrate this 10-year anniversary of the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT). I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many dedicated people who have worked together across the Mekong region and beyond, to reach this important milestone. Myanmar is particularly proud to be the birthplace of COMMIT, as the original COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Yangon on 29 October 2004 by representatives of all six countries in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. As we are all aware, human trafficking is a serious crime against humanity. Virtually every country in the world is affected by this unacceptable phenomenon, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination for victims. It is alarming that trafficking in persons remains on the rise today, despite the considerable efforts being made around the world to combat this egregious crime. In the Mekong region, the rising scale of human trafficking is cause for grave concern.

Myanmar believes that the critical value of the COMMIT Process lies in its commitment to eradicating all forms of human trafficking in the region. COMMIT is working towards this goal by laying down foundations for strong and effective cooperation at all levels, while continually sharing and evaluating progress in the sector. COMMIT adopts an integrated and coordinated approach involving Governments, the UN, civil society
and the private sector in a strong spirit of partnership and alliance. Our COMMIT meetings provide excellent opportunities to look at the impact that the process is having on the lives of vulnerable people in our region.

The COMMIT Process has paved the way for Myanmar to become the first country in the Mekong region to enact a comprehensive anti-human trafficking law in line with international standards. Myanmar is also proud to be one of the first Mekong countries that established a special police unit dedicated to anti-trafficking work, widely regarded as a best practice in the region.

COMMIT has helped facilitate Myanmar’s adoption and implementation of a National Plan of Action on counter-trafficking. In addition, it has enabled Myanmar to sign two bilateral Memoranda of Understanding on human trafficking, with Thailand and China respectively, in an effort to foster stronger cooperation with our neighbouring countries. Through these agreements, six Border Liaison Offices have been established and are currently operating along Myanmar’s borders with Thailand and China, to help prevent cross-border trafficking.

Myanmar is proud of the progress it has achieved over the past 10 years in its fight against human trafficking. While COMMIT influenced much of this success, other significant factors include our country’s democratization process, improved cooperation with the international community, national reconciliation, peace building and development programmes, and in particular the rural development and poverty alleviation programmes.

In spite of COMMIT’s many successes, member countries must not lose sight of the fact that human trafficking remains a serious challenge in the Mekong region. To continue to make a real difference, we must maintain our strong common vision and ensure that our unified response is able to evolve and expand. It is critical that we address the root causes of human trafficking, and reach out to people who are directly affected by this terrible crime.

Myanmar believes that it is only through a well-coordinated approach and strong solidarity among the counter-trafficking community, that we can make a real difference in the lives of people who are suffering the cruel consequences of human trafficking and exploitation.”
A firm commitment to eradicating human trafficking

In 2004, the Government of Thailand together with the governments of Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Viet Nam signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region, known as COMMIT MOU. This MOU is used to gauge the joint intention and commitment of the six governments in the Sub-Region to combat human trafficking in all forms, with a particular emphasis on victim protection, and the need to prevent human trafficking and bring traffickers to justice.

The human trafficking situation in Thailand is directly linked with the human trafficking situation in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) countries. Sharing more than 5,000 kilometers of land borders with four neighbouring countries that each possess different economic achievement levels, coupled with more than 3,000 kilometers of coastline, makes Thailand an ideal destination for human trafficking. However, approximately half of the victims of human trafficking are Thai nationals and the other half are migrant workers from neighbouring countries. In this regard, three forms of human trafficking have been identified: exploitation for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour and forced begging.
Thailand recognises that trafficking in persons is a grave violation of human rights. Therefore the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act B.E. 2551 (2008) was entered into force. This Act specifically aims to protect victims of trafficking, both Thai and foreign nationals, without discrimination on any grounds. Based on victim-centered and multi-disciplinary team approaches, social workers participate in raids, rescue operations and victim identification process, together with police and other relevant authorities. Once victims of trafficking are identified, it is the role of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (MSDHS) to provide protection and assistance to the victims, with interpreters’ services supported by NGOs and international organizations in order to enhance the effectiveness of victim protection.

Recognising that no country can combat human trafficking alone, Thailand has cooperated with the COMMIT countries and several other destination countries such as Japan, Malaysia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. This cooperation includes, inter alia, agreements, MOUs and Standards of Procedures, as well as cooperation at the Thai-Lao and Thai-Myanmar borders. Due to effective cooperation between countries, case follow-up action and family tracing are expedited and repatriation can be done in a timely manner.

In accordance with the policy statement of the government announced to the National Legislative Assembly on 12 September 2014, trafficking in persons is a priority on Thailand’s national agenda.

The MSDHS, which is the national focal point for the anti-trafficking coordination, has set trafficking in persons as its priority, to find solutions with concrete actions accordingly. By pursuing international standards and the ‘5Ps approach’, the MSDHS has systematically integrated and led the anti-trafficking efforts together with relevant government agencies. As an example, the MSDHS successfully handled a recent case of six Thai workers who had been deceived to work on board fishing vessels and subjected to physical violations in Indonesia. The workers eventually escaped to Ambon Island, where they sought help. In this case, the MSDHS coordinated with law enforcement agencies to expedite the justice criminal response and assisted the Thai workers to return to Thailand safely. In addition, the government has developed the proposed resolutions for beggars and draft of the Surrogacy Act to prevent human trafficking.

As part of Immediate Plan, the Royal Thai Government has implemented several major achievements as follows:
1. “National Committee” meetings, chaired by Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha, are organised to confirm strong commitment to the prevention and suppression of human trafficking.

2. The Prime Minister has initiated the establishment of the Policy Committee on Human Trafficking and Illegal Fishing in order to address the issue of trafficking in persons in a more comprehensive manner. This is evidenced by the work of five Subcommittees that deal with:

I) Human Trafficking,
II) Fisheries and Illegal, Unregistered, and Unreported (IUU) Fishing,
III) Child Labour, Forced Labour, and Migrant Workers,
IV) Women, and
V) Public Relations and Legal Affairs.

3. As cooperation and collaboration against trafficking in persons between government agencies, civil society and NGOs are essential, the MSDHS has established the National Prevention and Suppression Center as a single command and control center. This center has followed the ‘War Room’ model. The Minister of Social Development and Human Security serves as the Director of the Center and government representatives serve as a joint secretariat in order to speed up anti-trafficking efforts in an integrated manner.

4. Three further urgent measures will be undertaken to address human trafficking issues:

I) Concrete actions to improve the criminal justice response in order to bring offenders and traffickers to justice in a timely manner;
II) Regulatory measures relating to human trafficking in fisheries and fishery workers management; and
III) Regulatory measures relating to people smuggling comprehensively to prevent human trafficking particularly when the ASEAN Community will be integrated by 2015.

Trafficking in persons involves transnational organised crime. Therefore the COMMIT Process, as a multilateral cooperation, should focus on collaboration among the GMS countries to arrest brokers and traffickers that jointly exploit victims of trafficking, both in the country of origin and country of destination. This should be carried out in parallel with prevention measures, including increasing awareness on safe migration and human trafficking, and establishing human trafficking surveillance networks at the community level to eliminate people smuggling and human trafficking.
This year, COMMIT is marking its 10-year anniversary since the signature of the COMMIT MOU and the GMS countries have jointly developed the fourth phase of the COMMIT Sub-Regional Plan of Action. In this regard, the Royal Thai Government would like to reaffirm its commitment to eradicating human trafficking, and highlight the importance of cooperation and collaboration with the COMMIT Process.
The Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) is a unique initiative involving the six countries in the Mekong Sub-region, aimed at combating human trafficking, especially women and children. It is a high-level policy forum that strives to apply multi-sectoral approaches and international standards in its anti-trafficking work and a successful mechanism for cooperation and experience-sharing among COMMIT member countries.

Due to its transnational and high-profit nature, the crime of human trafficking is highly sophisticated, increasing in scale and becoming more and more complex. COMMIT supports the development of legal and policy frameworks as well as national plans of action for anti-trafficking work. Through the COMMIT Process, member countries have signed bilateral cooperation agreements and plans on cooperation in the field of anti-human trafficking; initiated coordination mechanisms for information exchange, victim rescue, and criminal arrests between countries; and successfully organized inter-sectoral training courses on combating human trafficking in the region.
Viet Nam is proud to be an active member in this dynamic process and of the tireless joint efforts of the COMMIT member countries and international community to combat human trafficking. Over the past 10 years, Viet Nam has implemented contents of the National Plan of Action on human trafficking as well as commitments made in the COMMIT Memorandum of Understanding, Joint Declaration and Sub-regional Plans of Action. At the regional level, Viet Nam’s main achievements include the signing of bilateral cooperation agreements on combating human trafficking with China (2010), Thailand (2008) and Cambodia (2005); Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with Cambodia and Thailand on procedures for the identification and receipt of victims; and an agreement with Lao PDR on criteria for victim identification, which has created a legal framework for Vietnamese agencies to cooperate with China, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Thailand in information sharing, investigation, arresting and transferring criminals, and the safe rescue and repatriation of victims.

At the national level, Viet Nam has attained such key achievements as the development and accomplishment of relevant legislation and policies related to human trafficking investigation and prosecution. Viet Nam has promulgated the Law against human trafficking and guidelines on identifying and protecting victims and their families, ratified the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC), and acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the UNTOC. This has helped to create an enabling legal framework for responsible functional agencies in the country.

Over the past 10 years, Viet Nam has identified 3,200 cases of human trafficking, arrested 5,200 traffickers, and rescued and received around 7,500 victims. The People’s Courts at different levels have brought to trial over 2,000 cases of 3,500 accused. Viet Nam has also developed a victim reintegration mechanism. In addition, significant results have been achieved through training, technical capacity building, crime prevention and suppression, victim protection, reception, repatriation and reintegration assistance.

With these results achieved over the past 10 years, Viet Nam highly appreciates the great efforts of COMMIT member countries, the dynamic coordination of the COMMIT Secretariat, and the strong support of international organisations. However, the COMMIT Process faces some significant challenges ahead, including:
• Improving information sharing between member countries
• Due attention to be paid to the supervision and evaluation of the implementation of COMMIT Plans of Action, as well as the criteria for the identification of victims
• The expansion of external relations with non-COMMIT countries
• Increasing the involvement of the private sector in the COMMIT Process, which in turn could lead to increased resources for anti-human trafficking.

The Government of Viet Nam is pleased to adopt the new Joint Declaration by six countries announced and agreed upon at IMM 4 and will effectively implement the Viet Nam Action Plan as well as proactively participate in regional activities. We will try our best and look forward to further strong and effective cooperation with the UN agencies, the COMMIT Secretariat, other member states and international organizations.

We strongly believe that we will achieve successes in the fight against trafficking in persons.