

**Note to file**  
**IMT-GT TRADE, INVESTMENT, AND TOURISM DATABASE (ITITD)**  
**1<sup>st</sup> TASK FORCE MEETING**

*4 September 2009, Putrajaya, Malaysia*

**1. Objective:**

Following IMT-GT Leaders' directives from the 1<sup>st</sup> Summit in 2005 on the need to monitor and effectively assess the impacts of subregional cooperation on its development, the Working Group on Trade and Investment (WGTI) has carried out the development of a database on trade, investment and tourism of IMT-GT, following a 2-stage approach with staggered deliverables.

In April 2009, a Task Force (TF) was formed comprising of senior officials from the National Statistical Agencies of respective IMT-GT member countries with the Director of the Center for IMT-GT Subregional Cooperation (CIMT), the permanent secretariat of the IMT-GT as member Secretary, to primarily oversee the development of the database and ensure its sustainability. ADB prepared the concept note for the database and the database framework is provided as attachment 1. The database therefore is designed to focus on collecting subregional and local data with particular emphasis on intra- and inter-IMT data that may not be readily available, but can be very useful for government agencies, academic and other interested parties in analyzing development impacts of subregional cooperation and eventually may translate them to effective policy interventions.

ADB provided support to organize the inaugural meeting of the IMT-GT Trade, Investment and Tourism Database (ITITD) Task Force on 4 September 2009 to discuss the feasibility of the database design, expected deliverables, and development timetable. The mission updated the group on the IMT-GT website and development progress of the ITITD, ongoing at ADB HQ. The agenda and list of participants are presented as attachments 2 and 3 respectively.

**2. Meeting highlights:**

***a) Update on the IMT-GT website:***

ADB presented update on the IMT-GT website ([www.imtgt.org](http://www.imtgt.org)) developed under ADB RETA 6462 and its scheduled turnover to CIMT's management at the 16<sup>th</sup> SOM/MM in 13-15 October 2009. The online database being developed can provide customized data responding to users' queries. In the interim while database development is ongoing, preformatted tables have been uploaded as sample data templates to illustrate data availability at the national level.

***b) Progress on the development of the ITITD:***

ADB reported on the progress and provided a snapshot of the development process. ADB presentation is provided as attachment 4. ADB consultant has also prepared data templates tailored for each of the I-M-T countries as a starting point. The structure of the template consists of both national and disaggregated (at provincial or subnational) levels for easy reference, but focus and added value of the ITITD will be on disaggregated data.

However, it is clearly noted that such data may not be readily available and therefore TF members are expected to verify and validate: i) data's availability and/or confidentiality; ii) if not available, how data could be obtained, either from a direct source or through proxy data, possibly with some changes in the existing statistical practice. Countries are requested to submit their validated data template to CIMT no later than 5 November 2009, with flexibility of adding and/or removing any data item relevant to their own statistical systems.

TF members highlighted the needs as well as difficulty in coordinating with domestic data collecting agencies, especially with regards to the non-readily-available items at disaggregated levels. Countries should therefore clarify their domestic mechanism of data collection and processing and report to the TF no later than 5 November 2009.

In discussing subregional level coordination mechanism and sustainability of maintaining and updating the ITITD, the TF explored the needs for an IMT-GT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on this matter. Thailand suggested the MOU may not be necessary for i) cumbersome and lengthy approval process at highest level; and ii) the tasks are assigned by Leaders and should be implemented without the MOU. However, the TF noted that an MOU can build continuity and clear mechanism to maintain and update the ITITD in a sustainable manner and therefore proposed to refer to the WGTI to decide whether such an MOU is necessary.

***c) Timeline/Schedule/Planning of TF Meetings:***

The TF decided to meet again after the submission of country templates and domestic mechanisms to discuss a common template as well as country-specific data. Subsequent meeting can be justified if there are such needs for the TF to discuss substantive issues. Indonesia agreed to host the next TF meeting.

***d) Report of the TF to the WGTI***

The TF discussed and agreed on its report to the WGTI as attachment 5, which was finalized after the meeting by CIMT. The minute of the TF meeting is attachment 6.

**3. Remarks:**

The substance of the ITITD rely on disaggregated data on trade, investment, tourism and other economic and social indicators, which may present serious technical challenge to IMT countries. However, such database is crucial to enable effective assessment of the development impacts in the subregion. Some raw data may be available and but need further processing to suit the requirements of the data templates. It is expected that TF members will help assess the problems and issues so that appropriate measures may be put in place. At subsequent steps, therefore, ADB may need to work more closely with statistics offices at national/provincial/local levels and provide necessary technical assistance.

The TF or ADB may explore additional data sources from private sector, especially companies or associations operating in the subregion, to complement official data provided by countries.