

INTRODUCTION

Trade activities significantly contribute to economic development and an efficiently managed transport system is a prerequisite for the competitiveness of trade. A deep and close cooperation amongst all parties concerned should therefore be promoted to enhance efficiency in serving existing and new markets. It is widely recognized that an international freight forwarding system that is fast, convenient and efficient plays a crucial role in helping to promote the expansion of foreign trade. The freight forwarding industry and multimodal transport can also facilitate intra-regional trade. The freight forwarders are the backbone of the development of multimodal transport and are in the best position to implement multimodal transport in the Greater Mekong sub-region where multimodal transport is at different levels of development. There is an opportunity for freight forwarders who provide value-added and multimodal transport services, to enhance their activities through the growing regional and world markets as well as develop sub-regional networks as part of their future strategy for growth.

The Government of France generously approved the funding of the project "Development and promotion of the freight forwarding industry and multimodal transport in the Greater Mekong subregion". The funding was made available in 1999 and a sub-regional seminar was held in Bangkok, Thailand in October 1999. Four country - level workshops were held in Vientiane, Lao People Democratic Republic, Ho Chi Minh, Viet Nam, Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Yangon, Myanmar in October and November 1999 respectively.

The objectives of the seminar/workshops were:

- (a) To review the present situation with regard to freight forwarding and multimodal transport including existing legislation and procedures in the selected countries.
- (b) To identify the constraints facing the freight forwarding and multimodal transport industry and determine strategies to overcome these constraints.
- (c) To enable the national freight forwarders' associations in the selected countries to meet their immediate training needs and requirements through training of trainers.

Reports of the sub-regional seminar, held in Thailand and the country-level workshops held in Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam, Cambodia and Myanmar are contained in this document.