



For Immediate Release

2 August 2010

Mekong Tourism Forum 2011 Takes Shape

VIENTIANE – The 2011 Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF), under the tentative theme ***Emerging Destination – New Experiences***, is slated for 27-28 May 2011 in Lao PDR's fast-growing Champasak Province at Pakse Town's Grand Hotel on the Mekong riverside.

Co-organized by the Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA) and the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) with sponsorship from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and USAID's ASEAN Competitive Enhancement (ACE) project, the confirmed two-day event will feature eight conference sessions, a Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Travel Fair, sports activities, and Fam trips taking through Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Mr. Thaviphet Oula, LNTA Deputy-Director General, Department of Planning and Cooperation, said, "MTF 2011 presents the perfect platform for GMS countries to showcase their new products, recent developments, current opportunities, and ongoing challenges, while weaving in themes concerning service standards, product quality, and responsible/sustainable tourism practices."

The first day's provisional schedule calls for sessions moderated by country experts during which the public and private sectors, development agencies, and community representatives from the six GMS countries will provide an overview and update on their destinations.

The second day's timetable focuses on three main areas: the issues and challenges of overland travel and access to remote destinations, the importance of service quality and education/training in the tourism and hospitality sectors, and responsible/sustainable practices to preserve tourism assets.

The concurrent GMS Travel Fair will take place in the Grand Hotel's conference hall, and is expected to attract up to 100 exhibitors including displays from community-based tourism projects, tour operators, NGOs, and public-sector tourism organizations.

Meetings for the ADB-LNTA Sustainable Tourism Development Project (25 May) and GMS Tourism Working Group (26 May) will be held prior to MTF 2011.

MTF 2011 will also offer a slate of sporting activities, with a mini-marathon, cycling, and even a swim across Mekong River under consideration.

A sponsorship scheme for GMS tourism-related enterprises is also in the pipeline, as is an MTF 2011 website.

For further information, Email: mtf@mekongtourism.org or telephone the MTCO at: (+66) 2-612-4150.