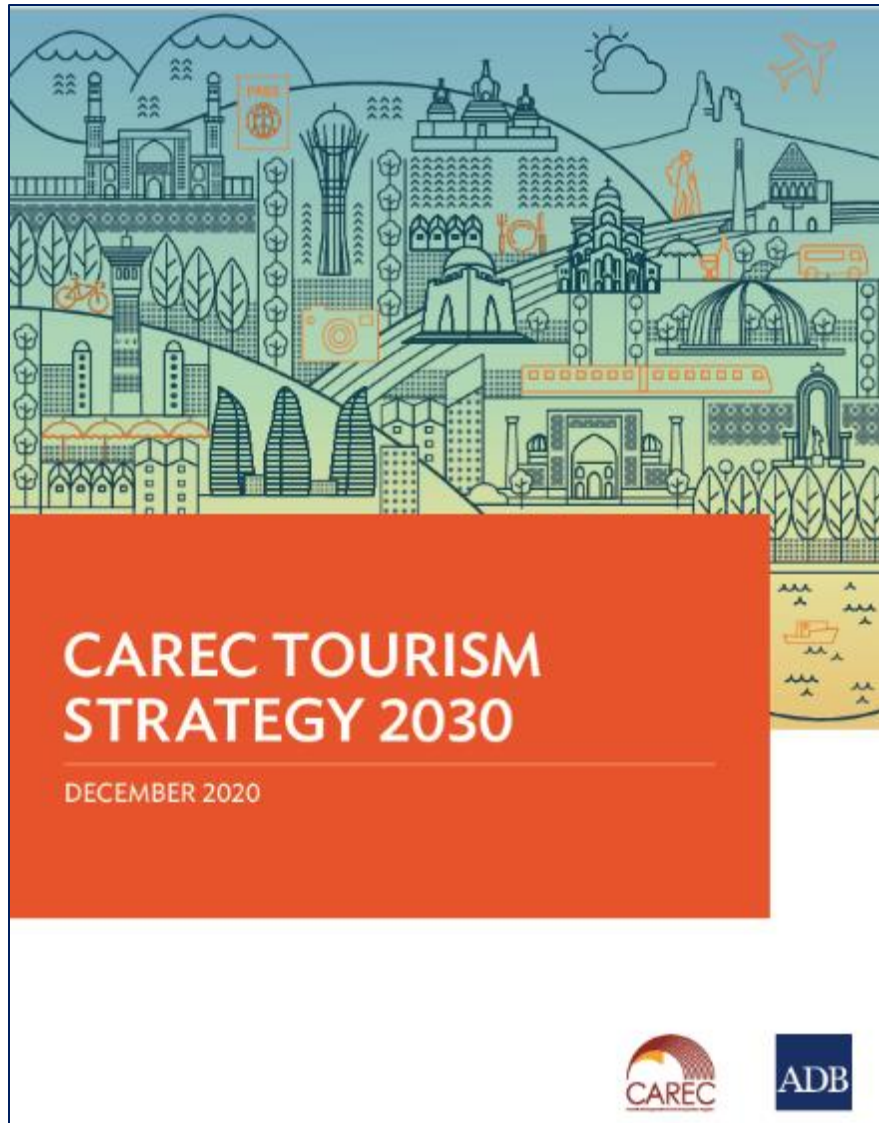


Session 12: Lessons Learned From Greater Mekong Subregion Tourism Cooperation

**CAREC Tourism Working Group Meeting
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
9 to 11 September 2026**

Context: CAREC Tourism Working Group Priorities*



Develop Knowledge



Develop Projects



Strengthen Capacity



Facilitate Cross-Border Travel



Engage the Private Sector

*8 November 2024 CAREC Joint Ministerial Statement
20 November 2025 MoU on CAREC Regional Tourism Development

Greater Mekong Subregion Lessons

CAREC Priorities	GMS Examples	Enablers	Lessons	Insights
Develop Knowledge	Policy advice <i>–Smart Tourism Ecosystem Development Readiness in Southeast Asia</i> <i>–Alternative Accommodations in Southeast Asia</i>	• Semiannual GMS TWG Meetings • Academic collaboration • GMS Knowledge Network	Sequencing: policy brief → learning program → follow up destination-level training / legal advisory services	• TWG agenda includes knowledge sessions • TWG relationship management. Regional knowledge institutions invited to TWG meetings
	Seminars <i>–Policies and Practices to Foster Sustainable Tourism after COVID-19</i>	• ADB's Southeast Asia Development Symposium • Pacific Asia Travel Association collaboration	Demand driven and timeliness	Co-organize with private sector tourism association to reach wider audience
		• ADB Country Knowledge Plans		

Greater Mekong Subregion Lessons

CAREC Priorities	GMS Examples	Enablers	Lessons	Insights
Develop Projects	•GMS Tourism Strategy 2030 (47 projects, \$1.3 billion) •GMS Regional Investment Framework 2026–2028 (12 projects, \$329 million) •ASEAN Tourism Investment Outlook	•GMS Strategy 2030 •Proactive GMS TWG Secretariat & members •ADB co-chairs GMS TWG Meetings, with increasing institution-wide ADB tourism engagement	Project proposals have a regional and national strategic anchor Sufficient advance resources allocated to identify feasible projects	TWG members build coordination capabilities recognizing tourism enablers (e.g. infra, education) are often not under direct control of National Tourism Organizations
		• ADB Country Partnership Strategies and annual country programming exercises		

Greater Mekong Subregion Lessons

CAREC Priorities	GMS Examples	Enablers	Lessons	Insights
Strengthen Institutions	• B.I.G Capacity Development Program (more than 20 learning programs for GMS mid-level and senior tourism officials organized) • Annual Mekong Tourism Forum organized alongside a semiannual TWG meeting	• Dedicated multi-donor ADB Technical Assistance • Knowledge events are a Core Mekong Tourism Coordination Office role with dedicated GMS TWG member financing and private sector in-kind support	• Participatory learning program design, impart practical knowledge and skills, measure results • Supplement core funds with resource sharing arrangements	Seed funds attract more money; talent attracts more talent and more resources
		• B.I.G Steering Committee • ADB Country Knowledge Plans		

Greater Mekong Subregion Lessons

CAREC Priorities	GMS Examples	Enablers	Lessons	Insights
Facilitate Cross-Border Travel	• GMS Tourism Marketing Action Plan 2026–2030 • www.mekongtourism.org • Annual Mekong Tourism Forum • Increasing visa exemption, e-visa, visas-on-arrival • ASEAN Framework Agreement on Visa Exemption • Increasing digital port-of-entry facilities	• Destination marketing is a core Mekong Tourism Coordination Office role • GMS TWG annual workplan • Most GMS members are also ASEAN members • GMS TWG member government financing	• Organize events in secondary cities along multi-country routes • Plan to supplement core TWG funds with resource sharing arrangements • Visa policy consistency, mirror arrangements, multiple-entry visas	Feasible cluster and/or realistic market-driven cross border route/circuit selection
		• GMS Program's wider large transnational road, rail, river transport and aviation projects		

Greater Mekong Subregion Lessons

CAREC Priorities	Similar GMS TWG Initiatives	Enablers	Lessons	Insights
Engage the Private Sector	• GMS Strategy for Private Sector Engagement (2025) includes increasing digital access for tourism SMEs • GMS Business Council embedded in GMS Program's institutional arrangements • Public-private partnership identification/assessments • Mekong Innovative Startups in Tourism • ADB Frontier Facility tourism SME finance	• ADB project loan, grant and TA financing • Business Council contributes GMS Regional Investment Framework preparation • ADB/Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office relationships with business incubators • Frontier has higher risk tolerance than typical ADB private sector finance	Align engagement with genuine private sector needs/aspirations	Relationship building is important. Include tourism businesses and associations in TWG meetings and regional learning programs