

Terms of Reference for the ACD Virtual Secretariat

1. Background and Purpose

In recent years, the ACD has progressed rapidly and dynamically in terms of membership (from 18 countries in 2002 to 30 by 2006), cooperation projects (in 19 areas) and dialogue (twice yearly at the Ministerial level for six years now). These developments have brought with them several challenges, i.e., member countries' sense of ownership in the ACD process, member countries' participation and achieving concrete deliverables. Member countries felt that the time had come to explore the possibility of setting up a secretariat or mechanism to deal with those challenges. This issue was discussed at the 1st High-Level Study Group Meeting held in Bangkok between 20-21 August 2007. The Study Group agreed to recommend to Ministers that **a rotating virtual secretariat be established to facilitate coordination and interaction** among member countries, **disseminate information** and updates as well as **provide support for the annual Ministerial Meeting (AMM) and related meetings**.

2. Functions of the ACD Virtual Secretariat

The ACD Virtual Secretariat (within the scope of its competence) shall:

- Provide administrative, organizational and technical support for AMM-related meetings, i.e., the annual Ministerial Meeting, the ACD Ministerial Meeting on the Sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Coordinating Group meetings, Prime and Co-Prime Movers' Consultation, Ambassadorial meetings and any other meetings deemed relevant to the preparation of the AMM;
 - Prepare and disseminate AMM-related meeting outcome documents and news to member countries (except for the Compilation of ACD Cooperation Areas Progress Reports, which will be collected together by the ACD Coordinator, as in previous years);
 - Encourage ACD member countries to utilize the existing virtual platform, i.e., the member login section of the ACD website, as an alternative means of communication.
 - Prepare and/or screen AMM-related meeting outcome documents and news for dissemination to the general public;
 - In Collaboration with the ACD Coordinator, prepare articles for the ACD e-News;

3. Host of the ACD Virtual Secretariat

- The host of the AMM shall assume the role of the ACD Virtual Secretariat as well as provide the financial support needed for its operation.

Note - The ACD Coordinator will continue to:

- Act as a clearing house for documents and information provided by ACD member countries concerning the cooperation projects (includes compiling ACD Cooperation Areas Progress Reports to be discussed at the Prime and Co-Prime Movers' Consultation and presenting an overview of progress made to the AMM);
- Maintain the ACD website (by providing technical support for the host of the Virtual Secretariat, i.e., by ensuring the host has administrator access to the ACD website and establishing and maintaining an archive of ACD documents).

4. Term of the Host of the ACD Virtual Secretariat

The term of the host of the ACD Virtual Secretariat will coincide with the period of ACD Chairmanship.