

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of EOC, I would like to express our appreciation to all the presenters who took time out of their busy schedule to attend this meeting and share the wealth of their knowledge. Thanks also to all the participants for their active involvement, frank discussion, and valuable inputs in making this meeting successful. This meeting has been a good reflection of what partnerships and regional cooperation are all about. After intense deliberations for two days we close this meeting with a lot of enthusiasm for many reasons:

One of the core objectives of CEP is inter-country knowledge exchange and capacity building which has been a corner stone of this meeting. I am very optimistic that the information and experience you have shared in this meeting will serve as valuable inputs for a smooth BCI implementation in each site. In addition, the knowledge base we have accumulated during these two days will provide a good foundation for further scaling up of BCI activities.

The last two days have also reaffirmed the need for robust regulatory frameworks at local, provincial and national levels, and eventually GMS wide to ensure successful implementation of BCI and sustaining of positive impacts achieved. Similarly, it is good that during the meeting discussions were initiated on valuation of ecosystem services as this will go a long way to facilitate policy level dialogue on mainstreaming the true environmental costs of development and should provide a sound basis for establishing systems for payment of ecosystem services in the GMS countries. This could become one source of sustainable financing to maintain such vital services for growth, development, livelihoods, and health of the GMS.

I would like to highlight few key messages that have emerged from these deliberations:

1. There is a clear need to focus increasingly on improvement of market linkages for biodiversity products and this is and should remain a major focus of implementation in 2009 and beyond
2. Financial incentive schemes, such as payment for ecosystem services (PES) to protect biodiversity and enhance livelihood of forest depended communities is also a critical element and the decision and policy makers in GMS countries need data and analyses to enable them to support such incentive schemes or mainstream environmental costs into development planning and financial operations
3. Regulatory frameworks to manage and maintain biodiversity corridors are important and must reflect the given realities of each site and sub-national setting, however a catalogue of guiding principles and generic provisions must be provided at national levels to allow creation of conducive regulatory frameworks and legal instruments at the local levels
4. A transboundary framework will need a lot of preparation and deliberation and we have to embark on it with caution. Successes at site level and information exchange among GMS countries can be a basis for taking such an effort forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen, there are many challenges ahead of us but I am optimistic that once site level implementation of BCI is seen by the GMS countries to have been successful, they will move forward towards a subregional framework for managing and maintaining shared natural resources in the GMS.

I believe that participants will have found this opportunity for experience and knowledge exchange among the BCI implementing partners from the GMS to be extremely useful and we will now work on other avenues for such exchanges in the future in the form of study visits and other fora.

I would like to conclude by thanking once again all the presenters and participants for their active participation during this meeting. Going forward, we need to ensure that the cooperation and partnership we have enjoyed so far will be further enhanced. I have a very good feeling that we will continue working collectively to achieve our common vision of a biodiversity rich and prosperous GMS.

THANK YOU