



GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION

MEETING OF THE GMS ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS

Shanghai, People's Republic of China

25 May 2005

JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Preamble

1. We, the Ministers from the six GMS countries, namely, the Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Union of Myanmar, Kingdom of Thailand, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, assembled for the first time in Shanghai, PRC reaffirm our commitment to the pursuit of the shared vision of growth, equity, and prosperity for the Subregion as enunciated by the first GMS Summit of Leaders held in Phnom Penh in November 2002. We further affirm that the key building blocks for attaining this vision are enhanced regional connectivity, increased competitiveness, and increased sense of community among GMS countries.
2. Noting the progress being made in developing mechanisms for facilitating sound environmental management since the inception of the GMS Program in 1992 and the establishment of the Working Group on Environment (WGE) in 1995, we acknowledge the importance of further accelerating the momentum of GMS environmental activities.
3. Recognizing the commitments of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPI), MDG 1 (poverty reduction) and MDG 7 (environmental sustainability), as well as global multilateral environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Kyoto Protocol, we acknowledge that achieving these objectives will require strong participation and coordinated actions among all stakeholders.
4. Convinced that the key GMS economic sectors depend critically on the conservation and contribution of healthy natural systems, and acknowledging that many of those who depend on natural resources for their livelihoods are the most vulnerable segments of society, we reaffirm our commitment and political will for a better environment and sustainable development.

Decade of Achievement on the Environment

5. We observe that considerable progress had been made under the GMS WGE since the mid 1990s. Initially focusing on capacity building and establishing environmental information systems, GMS officials have been trained on environmental issues through the Subregional Environmental Training and Institutional Strengthening Project (SETIS). We note that a program to establish subregional environmental information networks, the Subregional Environment Monitoring and Information System (SEMIS), developed geographic information system (GIS) capabilities through the region, and that some of the resulting images recently

published in the GMS Atlas of the Environment demonstrate how GMS countries are bound by shared natural resources and common development challenges.

6. We commend the Strategic Environment Framework (SEF) initiative for developing environmental analytical tools to help integrate environmental considerations in economic planning and implementation. We note that at least one of these tools, the Early Warning Information System, was used to identify a number of GMS “hotspots” or areas of particular environmental sensitivity that warrant special attention. To facilitate subregional planning and stakeholder engagement, we emphasize the critical importance of the second phase of the SEF which is currently developing national and regional environmental performance indicators to document progress towards meeting environmental targets and goals. We are pleased to learn that a third phase of SEF is being designed to assist in the institutionalization, updating and application of these indicators to effectively integrate environmental concerns into national and regional sustainable development planning.
7. We laud the joint efforts/approaches being undertaken by GMS governments to sustainably manage shared natural resources. Principles have been identified to manage critical wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin, as well as in the remote watersheds. We especially commend the Tonle Sap Initiative for developing a comprehensive, basin-wide approach to address poverty and environment threats to one of the most significant hotspots in the Subregion. We are pleased to see this approach being replicated elsewhere in the region and we encourage development partners to strengthen their support for such initiatives.

Our Commitment to Environmental Sustainability

8. The GMS is at a defining moment in collaborative environmental management with regard to the level of investment, the institutional arrangements and the emphasis placed on conservation and sustainable use of natural systems in the GMS development agenda. Recognizing the vital importance of developing economic corridors and infrastructure for promoting growth and reducing poverty, we also recognize the critical importance of ensuring that development of infrastructure and other associated investments are undertaken in an environmentally and socially sound manner in the GMS.
9. In light of the significant impact that sustained rapid development is likely to have on the Subregion’s natural resource base and the environment, and the need to safeguard this resource base and unique biodiversity, we endorse the launching of the GMS Core Environment Program and the establishment of the Environment Operations Center for its implementation by early 2006. We entrust the Core Environment Program to become a significant influence in the overall GMS program. We believe that this Program is a systematic and integrated initiative which we will review and update at regular intervals and which genuinely begins to shape the way development proceeds in the GMS.
10. A primary objective of the Core Environment Program is to conserve natural ecosystems and maintain environmental quality in the GMS. Recognizing the need to protect landscapes for conserving high value biodiversity within the economic corridors, we endorse the immediate implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (BCI) to be a key component of the Core Environment Program. We expect the BCI to be one of the approaches to facilitate and contribute to the establishment of sustainable management regimes for restoring ecological (habitat) connectivity and integrity within the GMS Economic Corridors. This would also help enhance the competitiveness and community in the GMS.

11. Recognizing the importance of the Second GMS Summit of Leaders on 4 and 5 July 2005 in Kunming, PRC, as an excellent opportunity to firmly renew the commitment of heads of governments to the sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection, we agree to submit the Core Environment Program, in particular the BCI, to the forthcoming Second GMS Summit of Leaders for consideration.

Strengthening Partnerships for Sustainable Development

12. Recognizing that sustainable management and conservation of natural resources, and poverty reduction in the GMS are of global significance, we urge development partners including governments, relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, multilateral financial institutions, other intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society to provide full support for the implementation of programs and projects that promote environmental sustainability and improve livelihoods in the GMS.
13. We recognize and appreciate the role of ADB, UNEP, and other development partners for their support of the environmental objectives of the GMS development vision. We particularly appreciated key efforts and assistance of ADB in assisting the GMS Program. We further call on development partners to strengthen their collaboration to create synergies among their programs in support of the GMS Core Environment Program.
14. Together we:
- Resolve to intensify our cooperation to sustainably manage and conserve our individual and shared natural resources;
 - Commit ourselves to monitor progress in the implementation of the Core Environment Program and recommend the adoption of the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative at the GMS Summit; and
 - Look forward to strengthening our relationships with development partners and seek their support and participation in promoting environmental-sound development in the GMS.
15. We express our deep appreciation to the State Environmental Protection Administration, Shanghai Municipal Government and the Government of the PRC for hosting our Meeting and for the warm hospitality accorded to all participants.

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