

Statement by
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at the Fourteenth GMS Working Group on Environment's Meeting

Luangprabang, Lao P.D.R, 2 July 2008

Respective GMS Delegates
Respective Mr Urooj Malik representative of ADB
Respective UNEP Regional representative
Distinguished Delegates
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Luangprabang Provincial Authority to deliver opening address at this GMS WGE 14 being held here today in Luangprabang. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all distinguished Delegates to Luangprabang which is a world cultural heritage city and I would like express my sincere appreciation to the staff of Environment Operations Center, of the National GMS Secretariat and officials from relevant ministries for selecting Luangprabang as venue for this WGE 14 as it is great honor for the People of Luangprabang to jointly organize this meeting as expected.

Distinguished Delegates
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

We all believe and well understand that good environment is essential for sustainable economic development while poverty eradication which is our concerns, specially the local communities who are based in the upland where the environment is vulnerable.

In the GMS countries, as the natural resource base is declining and development activities bring about dramatic changes in the landscape, risks to rural livelihoods, health and welfare are gradually increasing; It is important to carry out a comprehensive assessment to address these risks and particularly address the need for securing local livelihoods base in remote and mountainous parts of the GMS;

Lao P.D.R is landlocked country with multi-ethnic population, of which majority living in remote rural area in poor condition. However, they are located in areas of high biodiversity and source of ecosystem services. The challenges is, how to impact on poverty alleviation efforts by combining packages of measures tailored to reduce risks. National, provincial and local capacity building is significant and direct to our concern, but in addition to securing rural livelihoods, the emerging challenge of climate change impacts also need to be studied carefully and preparations undertaken to mitigate such effects such as "out of season" rainfall, flooding, storms, droughts, water supply shortages and others which will cause immense damage both to human life and property.

Distinguished Delegates
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

I have learned that the outcomes of the GMS WGE 14 Meeting held yesterday on 1 July 2008 were the proposed concept notes which were developed to materialize the Joint Statement of the GMS Environment Minister Meeting held in Vientiane in January 2008 and also to implement Joint Summit Declaration of the 3rd GMS Summit held in March 2008 hosted by Lao P.D.R. All these proposal concept notes are relevant to regional environment cooperation of GMS as well as consistent with the GMS countries requirements in order to strengthen capacity for better economic competitiveness while undertaking environmental issues into socio-economic planning through the strong efforts of the GMS countries to gradually and continuously resolve the environmental issues with ADB support in mobilization resources and involvement of donors and development partners, strengthening our capacity to cope with environmental challenges for sustainable use of our shared natural resources.

In this regards I would like to express my sincere appreciation the GMS WGE and the EOC for their efforts to develop these proposals, in which there are a number of concept notes are addressed on the assessment of impacts from the climate change. The GMS WGE will prioritize these concepts based on the country needs further for converting the directives by GMS EMM and GMS Summit JSD into pragmatic actions.

Distinguished Delegates
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

We recognize that the cooperation and coordinate between the environmental sector and economic sector at local level, national and regional levels and international level are a necessity to be addressed in order to jointly rehabilitate and maintain our shared natural resource for next generations.

For the Lao P.D.R the sub-regional cooperation in the environmental area is an inseparable from GMS Economic Development for sustainability, particularly by this time being we the people of Luangprabang is in process of 1 millions trees plantation in a year and also reduction of using plastic bags for being green and clean city according to the Sanitation Year 2008 as recently declared by the Lao government.

I would like to wish all guests and participants to have a nice stay in Luangprabang and I also wish you all a successful and fruitful meeting.

In conclusion, under the auspicious occasion, I declare the meeting opened.

Thank you!