



GMS countries respond to the food crisis and climate change

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, July 2 – The GMS Working Group on Environment committed to actively and appropriately respond to the urgent challenges of the current food crisis and climate change. This was one of the outcomes of the 14th Working Group on Environment Meeting that took place in Luang Prabang on July 1-2, 2008.

The WGE identified and prioritized specific actions for the Core Environment Program to respond to these issues. These include strengthening and harmonizing cross sectoral linkages between relevant sectors of the national and subregional development plans.

The Vice Governor of Luang Prabang Province and member of the National Assembly, H.E. Saysamone Khomthavong, highlighted the risk of unsustainable natural resource use to rural livelihoods, health and welfare. He emphasized the need for accelerating the “mainstreaming of environmental issues into socio-economic planning through the strong efforts of the GMS countries”.

During the two-day meeting, the GMS Core Environment Program priorities were discussed and follow up actions for the subregion were endorsed. Participants included senior government representatives from the six GMS countries, representatives from NGOs, academic institutions and researchers.

The meeting recognized that the issue of climate change is a serious threat to the sustainable economic development of the GMS and agreed to take up appropriate steps to proactively respond to this by integrating climate change in the development planning process.

“Integrating climate change measures in the national development planning processes of the GMS countries is an important step in responding to the consequences that climate change will have for developing Asia”, says Urooj S. Malik, Director, South East Asia Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, ADB. “It is very encouraging to see Lao PDR as an early mover in this respect”.

Discussions focused on the issue of food security for the subregion and the need for ensuring national coordination between the relevant sectors and strengthening subregional coordination among countries to maximize resource use efficiencies and environmental gains.

The participants also discussed how the strategic collaboration embodied by the Working Group on Environment and the Environment Operations Center can be taken further. The desirability of long-term future institutional development of EOC was discussed.

Finally the participants also reaffirmed the directive of the 3rd GMS Summit Leaders Meeting held in Vientiane in March 2008 regarding the importance of engagement with the private sector, the continued involvement of youth as a pivotal stakeholder in environmental issues in the GMS and the strengthening of trans-boundary and cross-sectoral aspects of environment.

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