

# **Address at the Second GMS Environment Ministers Meeting**

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**Respected Minister of the Water Resources and Environment Administration of Lao PDR, Mme. Khempheng Pholsena, Vice President of Asian Development Bank, Mr. , ministers, ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning.

It's my great pleasure to come to this beautiful city of Vientiane to participate in the Second GMS Environment Ministers Meeting. First of all, please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese Delegation, to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Water Resources and Environment Administration of Lao PDR and Asian Development Bank (ADB) for their considerate arrangement of the meeting.

As the host country of the First GMS Environment Ministers Meeting in 2005, China is very glad to witness the convocation of the Second GMS Environment Ministers Meeting in Lao and the substantive progress obtained in the last two years in the field of environmental cooperation in the subregion.

The Chinese government has always attached great importance to the cooperation with GMS countries and regarded the proper handling of domestic environmental protection work as the basis for strengthening international cooperation in the subregion. Presently, we are taking active efforts to upgrade the local natural conservation construction and management work under the environmental cooperation in this subregion. By 2006, the province of

Yunnan, as the major participator in the GMS cooperation, has boasted 192 nature reserves of 3.36 million hectares with the forest coverage reaching 49.91%. Similarly, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region has set up all types of nature reserves numbering 72 of 1.435 million hectares in total area with the forest coverage of 52.71%. Following unremitting efforts of government at both the central and local level, the regions participating in the GMS environmental cooperation have all seen overall stable environmental quality and certain degree of improvement in environmental management capacity, thus contributing to the sustainable development of this river basin.

China is now undertaken the drive of building a well-off society in an all-round way. Like the rest GMS countries, China is stepping into a grand new stage of development. In an effort to address the conflict between fast economic growth and pressure on resources and the environmental, the Chinese government has made major adjustment to its environmental protection policy by putting forward the historic transformation of environmental protection with the economic growth optimized by environmental protection. In specific, they are: first, shifting from a single economic focus to a dual and-equal focus on the economy and environmental protection; second, reducing the lag between economic growth and environmental protection in such a way as to ensure both are on an equal plane; third, shifting from the reliance on administrative means only to the use of legal, economic, technical and necessary administrative means to protect the environment. By this, the Chinese government also lays down the constraining indicators on energy conservation and emission reduction, namely, by the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> "Five-Year" Plan period of 2010, the total discharge volume of major pollutants of China will be cut by 10% compared to that of 2005; the emission volume of SO<sub>2</sub> shall be reduced from 25.49 million tons of 2005 to 22.95 million tons; the discharge volume of COD shall be cut from 14.14 to 12.73 million tons; the wastewater treatment capacity of all the cities nationwide shall be no less than 70%; and the multi-purpose use rate of industrial solid waste shall be lifted to over 60%.

At the 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC held in October of 2007, the Chinese government further put environmental protection onto a more prominent position in its industrialization

and modernization development strategy, thus pointing out the direction for the environmental protection and sustainable development undertaking of China. The 17<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CPC puts forward environmental protection as a new request for attaining the striving goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way, stresses the building of conservation culture and stipulates to basically create the industrial structure, economic growth pattern and consumption mode highlighting energy and resource conservation and protection of ecological environment by 2020. It regards environmental protection as a new approach to fulfilling the sound and fast development of national economy, underscores major efforts in energy conservation and emission reduction and the acceleration of the transformation of economic growth pattern. It also highlights the reinforcement over the prevention and control of water, air and soil pollution as well as the betterment of urban and rural living environment. It includes environmental protection as a new content in the diplomatic relationship of China and maintains that countries all over the world should "assist and cooperate with each other in conservation efforts to take good care of the Earth, the only home of human beings". Meanwhile, the Chinese government also spells out that China will "enhance the capacity to respond to climate change and make new contributions to protecting the global climate". Under the guidance of the foregoing spirits, China will participate in the GMS environmental cooperation in a more positive and practical manner.

The heightening of environmental cooperation in this subregion is the precondition for the protection of the ecological environment and the realization of the common sustainable development of GMS countries. We have always advocated that the cooperation within the subregion should take full account of the actual economic development status, historic and cultural tradition of each country, intensify dialogue, seek common grounds while putting aside differences, help each other in a mutually beneficial way and promote cooperation. Being the advocator and active promoter of regional environmental cooperation, China will further participate in the Core Environment Program in the future, energetically enhance the GMS Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative, intensify their flagship role in the environmental cooperation in this subregion and stimulate the launching of various cooperation programs on ecological rehabilitation and poverty alleviation, forest eco-system

and biodiversity conservation and the implementation of international environmental conventions based on the above programs so as to enhance environmental institutional construction and related capacity building activities.

The Core Environment Program, especially the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative has already yielded early results. We have also reaped the following useful insights through the participation in these activities:

- 1, The dominant position of programs and full participation of each GMS country are the basic premise for the success of the program. We should continue to increase the sense of being the master during the planning and implementation progress of the programs and ensure that the cooperation in these programs can really become a major platform for equal participation and joint benefit gaining for different GMS countries.
- 2, The implementation method of the flagship program is conducive to pinpointing the key work points, reputation building, reaching consensus as well as the optimized utilization of limited resources. We should further identify this method as the main theme for our cooperation, strengthen its leading role and promote the program to evolve into a real joint undertaking of GMS countries.
- 3, The guidance of the ADB, the financial support of all the donor countries and the active participation of various development partners have guaranteed the smooth implementation of the program. We expect that the ADB can exert more coordination and guiding role by making use of its advantages of rich expertise in this regard and would like to again thank the generous funding of the donor countries.

As the commitment to future environmental cooperation, the Chinese government will continue the endeavor to enable the countries in the subregion to better help each other through dialogue and communication, make joint headways in the environmental protection field to materialize the principles of "building an amicable, tranquil and prosperous neighborhood" with neighboring countries, make full use of the cooperation in human resource, technology, standard and experience to take good care of the eco-environment of the subregion under the

guidance of the principles defined-under GMS cooperation of "negotiation in seeking agreement and conducting pragmatic cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual respect" along with all the participating countries. We also hope that the depth and width of the cooperation can be further expanded through the GMS environmental cooperation to promote countries in the subregion to jointly realize sustainable development goals.

Last but not the least, I wish the complete success of this meeting. Thank you.