



GMS Environment Ministers Seek Added Funds to Combat Climate Change

MANILA, PHILIPPINES (30 JANUARY 2008) -- Environment ministers in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) this week called on the region's development partners to mobilize additional financial and technical assistance to assist the region in achieving ambitious targets for improved environmental and natural resource management.

In the Joint Ministerial Statement issued at the conclusion of the second GMS Environment Ministers Meeting 29 January in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), ministers highlighted the "environment for development" perspective and noted a need to take a pragmatic and pro-active approach to sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The GMS, which is composed of countries sharing the Mekong River, namely, Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, has achieved remarkable economic growth. However, this growth has come at a high cost to the environment. In 2005, at the first GMS Environmental Ministers Meeting, ministers launched the Core Environment Program, and its flagship Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative.

A key issue of concern at the recent meeting was climate change and the increasing risks it poses to biodiversity, livelihoods and economic competitiveness of the GMS. The Ministers voiced their support for the mobilization of additional financial resources, including the promotion of public-private partnerships, to address and respond to climate change risks.

"Considering our common concern that poverty alleviation remains at the core of our developmental efforts, we are confident that our efforts through the Core Environment Program/Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (CEP/BCI) can assist us in promoting sound environmental management and contribute toward generating income and reducing livelihood vulnerabilities," the ministers said in the joint statement.

The ministers highlighted the critical need for sustainable and efficient use of natural resources to improve environmental management and economic competitiveness in the GMS. They also emphasized the need for mainstreaming environmental dimensions in the development planning process for promoting sustainable development.

The GMS Core Environment Program, which began in 2006, is a long-term, program, funded through the Asian Development Bank (ADB). It is implemented under the GMS Economic Cooperation Program with a long-term goal of "a poverty-free and ecologically rich GMS." Its implementation is coordinated by the Environment Operations Center in Bangkok, Thailand.