

Opening Speech of HE. Mr. Asang Laoly

Deputy Prime Minister, Chairman of the National Environment Committee

Second Environmental Ministers Meeting

29 January, 2008

Vientiane, Lao PDR

Honorable Environment Ministers of the Greater Mekong Sub Region,

Mr. Vice President of the Asian Development Bank,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honor and pleasure for me to be with you today at the opening ceremony of the Second Environment Ministers Meeting, being held in Vientiane, Capital City of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. On behalf of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the multi ethnic Lao People, may I extend our warmest welcome to the Honorable Heads of Delegations from the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam as well as the Vice President of the Asian Development Bank and all distinguished delegates and guests of this Meeting.

I would also like to convey to the Asian Development Bank through Mr. Vice President Greenwood our profound appreciation for playing a vital role in promoting the GMS Economic Program. I also thank the Bank for facilitating the formulation of a unique program on environmental conservation and natural resources management, namely the GMS Core Environment Program.

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Your honorable participation in this very meaningful meeting symbolizes your trust and confidence in the GMS Economic Cooperation and Sound Environmental Management Programs. During the last 15 years, the Governments of GMS countries have implemented a number of projects, such as in energy and transport sectors, which would lead to deeper linkages within countries in our sub region. The Core Environmental Program must ensure that infrastructure development does not take place at the expense of the natural environment.

May I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and congratulations on the

outcomes of the Second GMS Summit at Kunming, specifically for endorsing the GMS Environment Core Program, and its flagship, the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative. I also would like to congratulate the establishment of sustainable financing mechanisms, the building and strengthening of institutional capacity, and the use of the strategic environment assessments and environment performance assessment tools. This holistic approach taken in the Core Environment Program will enable us to move forward for enhancing sustainable growth development.

The Government of Lao PDR is highly committed to sustainable development, based on securing the harmonization and balance between national economic development, social development and environment protection. This aim has been reflected in the National Socio-Economic Strategy up to the year 2020, the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy and the Five Years Socio-Economic Plans.

Environment protection is one of the crucial factors of poverty alleviation in the Lao PDR since some 85% of the multi ethnic Lao people still rely on nature to survive. We fully recognize that realizing national environment strategies, action plans and programs, such as the National Adaptation Plan to Climate Change, and related plans to Hazardous Chemicals area, as well as the planning of one million trees plantation are crucial elements in our efforts for environmentally sound development.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish the Meeting all the success. May I also wish you all good health and a pleasant stay in Vientiane. I am confident that your deliberations and sharing of experiences during this Meeting will further strengthen the implementation of the Core Environment Program, thus contributing to the building up of environmentally sustainable and prosperous Greater Mekong Sub Region.

On behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR, may I now declare the Second Environmental Ministers Meeting open.

Thank you!