



GREATER MEKONG
SUBREGION
**CORE ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAM**

Fourth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar 29 January 2015

Senior Officials' Meeting Chair's Report to the Ministerial Meeting

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Respected Chairman H. E. U Win Tun, Co-Chairman Mr. James Nugent, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I have the honor to present to you the summary of the Senior Officials' Meeting held on 27 January 2015, which I co-chaired with Mr. Sanath Ranawana from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

GMS Senior Officials have agreed on the theme “Increasing Investments in Natural Capital in the Greater Mekong Subregion” for the 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (EMM4) to take forward the call for green, inclusive, and balanced economy made by ministers at the 3rd EMM in Cambodia in 2011, and operationalize the guidance from the 5th GMS Summit in December 2014. The knowledge events that preceded the EMM4 have indeed brought together senior government officials and other stakeholders of the GMS program to develop a shared understanding of the environment issues of the region. Yesterday's Natural Capital Dialogue emphasized the value of natural capital and

posed opportunities for increasing investments in this asset through stronger partnerships within the context of inclusive and sustainable development in the GMS—to which the GMS Leaders have jointly declared their commitment last month in Bangkok at the 5th GMS Summit. The other side events held in parallel with the Senior Officials Meeting—the Natural Capital Business Forum, Biodiversity Landscapes Forum, and Environment Youth Meeting—have pooled together various stakeholders working in the region to build consensus on the need to integrate natural capital considerations into subregional and national development planning and explore mechanisms and opportunities for engaging in this natural capital initiative. I believe that we have done a good start in forging **stronger partnership to increase natural capital investments in the GMS.**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the **Natural Capital Knowledge Product** entitled *Investing in Natural Capital for a Sustainable Future in the Greater Mekong Subregion* was produced to inform the *Natural Capital Dialogue* about the compelling evidence of the need to increase investments in natural capital in the GMS. More importantly, this document has been produced by a collaborative effort involving over 20 organizations and many other individual experts under the auspices of the GMS Core Environment Program (CEP) and its Working Group on Environment, with technical coordination provided by the GMS Environment Operations Centre (EOC) and technical support provided by ADB – to all of whom I should personally like to thank and extend my congratulations. Clearly, this highlights the synergy generated from strengthened partnership working and the huge potential to be gained from building on such close collaboration.



The CEP has continued to strengthen its role as a knowledge hub for environment in the GMS. The efforts towards establishing a **regional environmental knowledge network** are very much recognized and appreciated. Since the last EMM, good progress has been made in integrating Myanmar with the rest of the GMS Program. The launching of a Myanmar Environmental Information Portal during EMM4 is a significant milestone towards this end. I invite all of you to take a look at it in the display area outside this meeting room. We look forward to expanding this regional network with other GMS country portals that will link to national hubs within the respective national support units.

The SOM also discussed the final preparations for today's Ministerial Meeting. Taking today's opportunity, we would like to extend our sincere appreciation once again to the host, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, for the warm hospitality and logistics arrangements made for this meeting. We would also like to congratulate all of our GMS member countries for achieving the most substantive possible outcomes in preparing deliverables for this meeting. The GMS Senior Officials noted the completion of the Natural Capital Knowledge Product which will be further reviewed and up-dated post-EMM4, prior to publishing in 2015; notable progress made on developing a regional knowledge network; and support for stronger partnership to increase natural capital investments in the GMS.

Going forward on these EMM4 deliverables, it is the objective of this strengthened collaboration among countries and various stakeholders and across key development sectors to inform decisions about investments associated with the GMS Regional Investment Framework (RIF) Implementation Plan (IP) and generate new investments in natural capital

within this framework. On the Environment Knowledge Hub, it is envisaged that this will be linked with all national hubs, which are gradually being established in the national support units of each WGE focal agency, and ultimately to become an Environmental Knowledge Network for the GMS.

The GMS Senior Officials also achieved consensus on the draft of the Joint Ministerial Statement, which is being presented to the GMS Environment Ministers for their endorsement at the end of this morning's plenary session.

Chair and Co-Chair, Excellencies, I am pleased to announce that the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand has kindly agreed to host the next WGE meetings, with the specific venue and date to be informed to the GMS counties at a later stage.

We are keenly expecting guidance from the GMS Environment Ministers' Retreat later today, on moving forward on the RIF Implementation Plan and how to best promote efficient coordination and collaboration among RIF implementing sector agencies; what needs to happen between now and the next Summit of Leaders to have a clear understanding and adoption of a natural capital approach in order to achieve inclusive and sustainable development; and future direction and vision for CEP and EOC.

We recommend that this report on the Senior Officials' Meeting be considered by the Environment Ministers for adoption.

Thank you for your kind attention.