

SESSION 7: CONFERENCE CLOSING REMARKS

CAMBODIA

Mr. Chuon Chanrithy,
Director & GMS-WGE National Coordinator,
Department of Natural Resource Assessment and
Environmental Data Management,
Ministry of Environment

Excellency, the Ministers of the GMS Countries, the Asian Development Bank, Distinguished Delegates of the GMS Countries, Development and Implementing Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is our great pleasure to deliver the country remarks on behalf of the Cambodian Delegates at the closing of the International Conference on the GMS 2020 under the theme of “Balancing Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability.”

Please allow me to extend our deep appreciation and sincere thanks to all distinguished GMS country delegates for sharing useful insights related to the conference theme, the Asian Development Bank for organizing and supporting this very important event, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand for hosting such an important event, and all development partners for your continuous support and participation.

During this two-day event, we have had a number of presentations and papers, and I think we have got a very good picture and insights relating to the emerging issues, development pressures on food-water-energy nexus and challenges faced in having efficient and effective utilization of water. In particular, there is a need to improve the knowledge base of three inter-related thematic areas to address the balancing of economic development and environmental sustainability.

For years, Cambodia has experienced spectacular progress in social, economic, and environmental aspects. While national economic growth has boosted the country's economy and lifted many out of poverty, the environmental degradation, decline in natural resource base and ecosystem services, coupled with transboundary issues like water scarcity, pollution, and floods and drought resulting from climate change are of great concern.

Fully aware of development pressures on natural capital and the challenges to environmental sustainability, the Royal Government of Cambodia has taken significant steps to reduce poverty in rural areas, ensure environmental safeguards and increase efficiency in natural resource

use. Besides, our government has developed the Green Growth Roadmap to harmonize national policies, helping facilitate the transition to a green economy.

Before concluding my brief remarks, I would like to leave some thoughts with all of you. It is really important to stress how important it is to have the themes of our two-day Conference taken into account in the policy formulation process at national level. The factors that are important for sensitizing top policy makers about the nexus, formulating a related strategic plan, and finally implementing priority actions are the following:

- Need to have the national government's buy-in
- Need to convince relevant sectoral ministries/agencies to acknowledge importance of the nexus
- Need to apply a multisectoral approach to deal with nexus-related policy interventions
- Need to set up an appropriate institutional mechanism to draw up, implement and monitor a related strategic plan
- Need to build national capacity.

Thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you all at the next event.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Wang Ling,
Deputy Director,
International Department, Ministry of Finance

Chair, Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, we would like to express our sincere thanks to the GMS Working Group on Environment and ADB for co-hosting this event. And also thanks go to the participants from GMS countries and all other participants for their great contributions to this event.

Balancing Economic Growth and Environmental Sustainability is the theme of the Conference. We think it is the common challenge we are facing now. Over the past two days of discussions, we have had fruitful outcomes, which are very useful to confront the challenges and to move the GMS cooperation forward.

Rich in water and biological and other natural resources, the GMS has enormous economic potential and development prospects. The GMS countries have been working for economic reforms, industrial restructuring and greater

openness to the outside world. Accelerated economic and social development has become their shared goal. In the past 20 years, thanks to the joint efforts of the ADB and all the countries, subregional cooperation has moved steadily forward, borne rich fruits, and played an active role in eliminating poverty and promoting economic and social development of the GMS countries.

In December 2011, in the Fourth Greater Mekong Subregion Summit, the new Strategic Framework for cooperation covering the next 10 years has been approved. The new Strategic Framework has focused on eight priority areas, which are crucial to the future development of the countries. In order to realize the goal of the Strategic Framework, we should pay more attention to sustainable development.

The People's Republic of China and ADB have had good cooperation during the past years and our country stands ready to work with ADB and other GMS countries to ensure implementation of various cooperation initiatives so as to take the cooperation in all fields to greater width and depth, and contribute to the common development and prosperity of GMS countries.

Thank you.

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Ms. Keobang A Keola,
Director General,
GMS National Secretariat-cum-ASOEN¹ -LAO
Chairperson, Ministry of Natural Resources
and Environment

Good afternoon Distinguished GMS Participants, Resource Persons and Panelists, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me on behalf of the Lao Delegation to express our sincere thanks to ADB, especially the Environment Operations Center, for organizing this very important conference today.

Resource persons as well as panelists have addressed many important issues, relevant to our region both theoretical and practical, operational aspects and shared experience with us during this conference. This conference enhances our knowledge, awareness, and better understanding about resource efficiency, its importance and necessity, and the opportunities, challenges, and productive harmony

between the water, food, and energy sectors. Most of the resource persons and panelists are very familiar with the challenges facing resource use, economic growth, and environmental sustainability and opportunities. Hence, many recommendations made with regard to economic growth and environmental sustainability on a number of priority areas, especially capacity building, need to be identified by us and taken up as quality investment projects or integrated into implementation plans.

Therefore, the individual GMS countries should come up with implementation plans as early as possible, as there is a need for this platform to benchmark these issues. We have just held a GMS Summit in last December and it is timely for us to have this conference providing us a good platform and guidance to move forward. But we should also have a platform approach or mechanism to discuss how to implement this kind of work, reflecting the real situation in different countries. We need to ensure development of a proper approach, especially as the countries have unequal development; we have large and small countries, advanced and less advanced. It is quite difficult for us to have the same kind of approaches across the subregion. And we would like to request the advanced countries in the GMS to help those who are less developed. We would like to request ADB to advise us on how to take advantage of this opportunity, how to meet the challenges that we have ahead of us, and how GMS countries can help each other more in improving capacity. This is, I think, very important.

In terms of agriculture and energy themes mentioned during this two-day conference, we also need to identify for ourselves what level of assistance we will require to implement technology that lowers our environmental impacts. We also need to scope out what kind of information will assist policy makers in choosing the most appropriate technology that is suitable to the needs of the country. Regarding water, we also have the Mekong River Commission. What are the current policies with regard water management in the Mekong River Commission and how can we upscale and integrate these into the GMS programs.

We also need to look at the existing policy and practices that balance water use and increase its sustainability. In general, the GMS countries have to identify the kind of support we need to establish good governance structures, supporting economic and quality investments. In order to work together to unify our efforts to balance our economic development and environmental protection for poverty reduction in the subregion, we are looking forward to continuing close participation in the new Strategic Framework 2012–2022

¹ The ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment

by taking necessary action and responsibility to contribute to developing quality investments, as mentioned by the panelists today, and to facilitate the GMS moving closer toward subregional integration.

We clearly understand that the new Strategic Framework initiative will be more complex, dealing with both hardware and software, multisectoral investments, and difficult trade-offs between conservation pressure and development aspects, environment, and climate change. We will develop more knowledge-based and analytical thinking in the region. At the national level, we will review the recommendations and information on opportunities and challenges received from this conference, and how to digest them and to work together with the relevant ministry at central and local levels, including private sector and civil society, to develop a national implementation plan as well as a master plan to incorporate into those of other GMS countries as Subregional Plan 1. This is a difficult exercise awaiting us.

I thank you.

MYANMAR

Ms. Kyi Kyi Mint,
Assistant Director,
Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry

Distinguished Guests, GMS Participants, and Ladies and Gentlemen.

First of all I would like to thank ADB and the Environment Operations Center for organizing this Conference.

Regarding food security, this is an issue important for all GMS countries. The agriculture sector is of strategic importance for the GMS Economic Cooperation Program. My point is that diverse drivers of change will influence agriculture over the coming decades—not just climate change. So we need to consider the major drivers of food security. There are six major drivers: (i) population growth; (ii) dietary change; (iii) urbanization; (iv) trade and globalization; (v) biofuel production, which competes with crop production; and (vi) climate change. We should consider the implications for food security from these drivers, to minimize the risk to people in the GMS countries in the future. In addition, an essential component of an effective solution should include adequate transfer of foreign direct investment, technology, and know how.

I thank you.

THAILAND

Mr. Chudchawan Suthisrisilapa,
Expert on Convention/International Cooperation,
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Thai participants, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the organizers, who selected Thailand as a venue for such a conference and to congratulate you on the success and fruitful outcome of the conference.

I appreciate the conference very much and I sincerely believe that it has been very informative and useful for implementation of activities related to economic development and environmental challenges. The knowledge and experience gained from the GMS Conference enables us to see how other GMS countries have developed towards achieving sustainability. We hope that ideas generated in this conference can reflect our needs at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development or Rio+20, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on 20–22 June 2012.

I wish all participants a safe trip back home. Thank you.

VIET NAM

Mr. Duong Hung Cuong,
Official,
Foreign Economic Relation Department,
Vietnam Ministry of Planning & Investment

Excellencies, GMS Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

For and on behalf of the Viet Nam delegation, I would like to express our sincere thanks to ADB, the Environment Operations Center, and Thailand as the host country for inviting us to attend this very important Conference.

This year, the GMS community will celebrate 20 years of cooperation. During this time, the GMS program has gained many achievements and successes in comparison with other regional cooperation initiatives.

During these two days of intensive discussion and sharing, we have gained a lot of useful and fruitful information. GMS countries will face a variety of challenges in the future.

These are: water scarcity, energy shortage, food security, environmental degradation, and climate change. I think the message is clear. Balancing economic growth and environmental sustainability is a must. Business as usual is not an option.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in order to achieve sustainability in the region, the study of solutions and measures to tackle emerging issues is essential. More importantly, strong cooperation and support among GMS countries are critical. We believe that with support from ADB, the development partners, and active participation of the private sector, the GMS countries will continue to contribute to the prosperity of the region.

Once again, I would like to thank the organizers for an excellent conference; thank you very much facilitators and speakers for your great work. The results of the conference will play an important role in the decision-making process relating to food-water-energy nexus.

I wish you all health and success. Thank you very much.

Asian Development Bank

Mr. James A. Nugent,
Deputy Director General,
South East Asia Regional Department

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Our colleagues from each of the GMS countries have done an excellent job in terms of summarizing the deliberations over the course of the past two days and delivering the message of the importance of following through with the measures that have been outlined with respect to achieving inclusive economic growth and environmental sustainability. So I will be brief with my comments.

ADB has facilitated development of the GMS framework that will provide the operational platform for implementing the green economic agenda. In this context, the deliberations in the past two days have really outlined the challenges involved in managing the food, water, and energy nexus in the GMS. Also, affirming that environmental sustainability is imperative to inclusive growth was pointed out by a number of speakers over the past two days. The discussions have also identified key messages for facilitating policy dialogue and institutional

convergence for environmental sustainability in the GMS. The conference will take these policy recommendations forward as part of the Action Plan to be implemented through the GMS Economic Cooperation Program, but they are also important to the GMS Summit in 2014. I will highlight four specific actions that ADB will take in the course of the next two years.

The first is, by the GMS Summit in 2014, the GMS countries and policy makers will aim to arrive at common principles of cooperation and coordination on addressing the overall food-water-energy nexus for the mutual benefit of the subregion.

Second is that food-water-energy nexus issues will inform the next GMS Strategic Framework and the GMS Regional Investment Framework, which represents the next generation of investment projects, or the pipeline. This will help us identify the proper placement of projects going forward for the next decade.

Third, ADB will coordinate and cooperate with GMS countries and development partners to address knowledge and information and institutional gaps required to manage the nexus in the context of the Strategic Framework and the Regional Investment Framework formulation. A number of speakers pointed out that there is still fragmentation, there are still gaps and we need to get harmonization and alignment; we need to move forward with this agenda.

And fourth, the GMS Core Environment Program and the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative Phase II as well as the Core Agriculture Support Program II will carry forward the recommendations from the conference in terms of institutional, policy and financial options to address this nexus as part of their operational plans for the next five-year period 2012–2016.

Finally, I would like to thank all the participants for your valuable inputs including the GMS country representatives, development partners and partner institutions, and in particular, our hosts the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and NESDB, Thailand. I would also like to thank the Environment Operations Center and the GMS 2020 Conference Team for their excellent coordination arrangements during the past two days. I know there is a lot of work to get 240 people into a room to have this level of policy dialogue.

So congratulations to all and with that I will stop here and declare the Conference closed. Thank you very much.

