

20th Annual Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment

26 March 2014
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

Summary of Proceedings

Introduction

1. The 20th Annual Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion Working Group on Environment (WGE AM20) was chaired by Mr. Hla Maung Thein, Deputy Director General, Environmental Conservation Department, Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MOECAF), Myanmar, and co-chaired by Mr. Sanath Ranawana, Senior Natural Resources Management Specialist, Asian Development Bank (ADB). The meeting was attended by representatives from the environment and other relevant ministries of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam; the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) national secretariats; donor and development partners; ADB and GMS Environment Operations Center (EOC) staff. The list of participants is in Appendix 1.

2. The meeting was held concurrently with the 11th Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Agriculture and was preceded by the Joint Knowledge Event on "*Managing natural capital to ensure food, energy, and water security*". The aim of the WGE AM20 was to report on the highlights of the Core Environment Program (CEP) achievements and progress in 2013, plan on translating the GMS Regional Investment Framework (RIF) into action, and discuss priorities and areas for regional environmental collaboration. The program is attached as Appendix 2.

Session 1: Opening Session

3. In his welcome and opening remarks, Mr. Nay Aye, Director General, Environmental Conservation Department, MOECAF, offered a different perspective of looking at environmental protection as a driver of growth rather than constraint to economic development and is therefore essential for long term economic sustainability. Myanmar, like the other countries, is confronted with several environmental issues. The Government has pledged to incorporate environmental conservation in the economic development agenda, calling on the full support of its people, social organizations, and foreign investors. Mr. Nay Aye proudly shared Myanmar's notable progress in environmental safeguards with the assistance of ADB/EOC. Development of environmental impact assessment procedures and environmental quality standards are underway. He expressed strong interest in more collaborative activities with the other GMS countries in the implementation of the CEP. He briefly outlined the agenda of the meeting, then thanked the ADB/EOC for organizing the meeting and wished everyone successful and productive discussions.

4. Mr. Javed Mir, Director, Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture Division, Southeast Asia Department (SERD), ADB, referred to the knowledge event from the previous day—that a lot was said on the need for, and challenges of, working across sectors, across

administrative jurisdictions, and across national boundaries. He encouraged the participants to continue sharing their views on the issues at hand (the “what”) and also brainstorm on the “hows”. Despite the daunting challenges on environmental sustainability and in program implementation, the WGE and the countries should be pleased to recognize their achievements so far. Phase I had seen the delivery of a \$30 million program and the establishment of a working group and EOC, which has convinced the governments of the GMS countries and ADB to increase investment in natural capital by threefold. Now phase II should work on speeding up implementation with greater focus on mainstreaming integrated planning approaches, renewed focus on transboundary landscapes and climate change, continue pilots in corridors to mainstream best practices and secure new investments, and take advantage of emerging opportunities in Myanmar. As to the actions taken to address program implementation challenges, results-based monitoring systems, clearer procurement plans and procedures, and a fully-operational secretariat have been put in place, programmatic systems reviews have been initiated, and most letters of agreements (LOAs) have been signed with the countries. The key challenge for WGE and CEP between now and end of 2015 is to consolidate the achievements to date, prioritize key results for the next 3 years, and define a road map for achieving them. The main priorities should include (i) demonstrating feasibility to stimulate investments in natural capital and uptake of cleaner technology and embed them in the RIF; (ii) defining the vision of an environmental operations network as a regional institution to become a knowledge hub and resource center; and (iii) developing clear strategy and mechanisms for engaging the private sector in the program. He invited everyone to start taking stock of progress, get feedback from the partners, and engage in fruitful dialogues about the RIF.

5. The other heads of country delegations: Mr. Chuon Chanrithy, Cambodia; Dr. Sun Xuefeng, PRC; Mr. Phetsamone Dalalom, Lao PDR; Dr. Asdaporn Krairapanond, Thailand; and Ms. Kim Thi Thuy Ngoc, Viet Nam—expressed sincere appreciation to Myanmar Government, MOECAP, EOC, ADB, development and implementing partners for organizing this event and supporting the implementation of CEP Phase I and Phase II. They also highlighted their experiences in CEP Phase I, and the progress and challenges of CEP Phase II implementation, including individual country activities, implementing partners and emerging opportunities e.g. law or strategy of a country. In particular, the PRC delegate highlighted environmental issues in the GMS that need to be addressed. In this respect, PRC in collaboration with ADB/EOC offered financial and technical support for the following projects in the RIF environment pipeline: (i) Enhancing Rural Environmental Governance in the GMS and (ii) Establishing Environmentally Sustainable City Partnerships in the GMS. The Thailand delegate reiterated the issues and challenges of CEP Phase II implementation particularly on the need for clarifying institutional arrangement and strengthening national support unit (NSU) capacity.

Session 2: Core Environment Program in Context

6. Dr. Michael Green, Technical Program Head, EOC, delivered a presentation titled “Analysis of Threats and Opportunities in GMS Transboundary Biodiversity Landscapes.” He highlighted environmental trends in the GMS and the importance of natural capital in terms of food, energy, and water security as well as economic growth. The presentation ended with a conceptual overview of CEP, including the program approach and geographic focus, current critical issues faced in the program implementation and corresponding responses/plans of action, CEP priorities and calendar of activities for 2014 to early 2015. The presentation is provided in Appendix 3.

7. Mr. Sumit Pokhrel, Deputy Technical Program Head, EOC, presented a summary of CEP achievements during 2013. Mr. Pokhrel began by explaining the program’s management tools including the updates made to the design and monitoring framework, and how country

work plans are integrated with the regional work plan. He summarized progress against milestones as well as achievements with cross-cutting objectives. Major outcomes by component were then presented, followed by issues affecting implementation and finally a summary of financial performance. A copy of his presentation is in Appendix 4.

8. During the discussion, Myanmar asked for clarification on the status of the NSUs and how CEP physical progress is measured. Viet Nam and PRC mentioned the value of CEP capacity building events during 2013 and said that NSUs will need ongoing capacity building support. PRC also said more regional exchange opportunities would be useful to enable countries to exchange lessons and experiences. Thailand mentioned that the country had initiated transboundary biodiversity landscape collaboration with Myanmar and Lao PDR, and an intention to do so with Cambodia. Thailand requested an update on the status of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project approval. Cambodia mentioned that the country is developing a new environmental strategy and action plan and that ADB/EOC support with this would be appreciated.

Session 3: Highlights of CEP Achievements and Progress

9. This session summarized key achievements of CEP from 2013. Country representatives made presentations on five areas of achievements, followed by the statement by co-financing partners, GMS country responses and an open discussion.

10. Ms. Li Xia from PRC presented the progress of environmental analysis of the GMS RIF. Given that many RIF investments are planned in major GMS economic corridors which lie in juxtaposition to biodiversity conservation landscapes, GMS countries need an assessment tool to help prioritize environment-friendly investments to minimize negative impacts on the landscapes. To assist the prioritization, CEP developed spatial multicriteria analysis (SMCA) tools for the RIF. Application of the SMCA led to the identification of environmental risks by individual sectors of RIF investments and the ranking of investment priorities based on landscape categories. The process also led to broader awareness and recognition of SMCA as a scientific and comprehensive method for reviewing and planning investment projects. Key challenges were related to the identification of a weighting system for criteria and indicators in the analysis process, and the lack of socio-economic as spatial data for analysis. Despite the challenges, SMCA has proved to be a critical visualizing tool to support decision makers in prioritizing sectoral investments and strategic planning. In future, SMCA would be a more useful tool for sector planners if used at an early stage to identify and prioritize investments. The presentation is attached as Appendix 5.

11. Dr. San Oo from Myanmar presented key achievements in 2013 under the safeguards component of CEP. At the country level, CEP's extensive engagement on safeguards in Myanmar has produced tangible results, including establishment of a safeguard system encompassing environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure, EIA technical guidelines, and national environmental quality standards. Opportunities are being explored to further scale up safeguard support in Myanmar through available ADB capacity development technical assistance funding. CEP is expanding its safeguards work in Cambodia and completed preparatory tasks for safeguard strengthening; a full review of the existing safeguard system and related capacity needs will soon commence. In addition, CEP has assisted the ADB to program support for enhanced safeguard application in agriculture, energy, and transport sector projects. CEP will also continue broad engagement with development partners in order to maximize complementarities in safeguard support to GMS countries. His presentation is provided in Appendix 6.

12. Ms. Pornpimon Kaewngam from Thailand presented progress of the GMS Green Freight Initiative. In 2013, the initiative started and included national pilot projects in Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. The pilot projects have three components: (i) eco-driving training for truck drivers; (ii) testing and raising awareness of green technologies for trucks, with the aim to reduce 10% of fuel use per vehicle; and (iii) capacity building in freight logistics management. Scoping workshops were held in each country. In Thailand, the workshop was hosted in January 2013 by the Office of Transport and Traffic Policy and Planning, the project's focal point, and engaged transport and environment stakeholders. A regional study looking at barriers and opportunities from small and medium enterprise financing for green freight was initiated in November. In parallel, an investment concept on low carbon freight for Lao PDR and Viet Nam was prepared and included in the RIF pipeline. Green freight has also been included in a priority list of projects under Lao PDR's Environmentally Sustainable Transport Strategy published in 2013. One of the challenges faced was the additional time required to set up cross-sector mechanisms between environment and transport ministries to implement green freight. In 2014, CEP will initiate a background study on the freight sector in Cambodia. The two training events will also be conducted: (i) the GMS PPP training on transport, energy use and climate change (April 2014), and (ii) the ADB-GIZ workshop cum training on efficient logistics (May 2014). A copy of her presentation is attached as Appendix 7.

13. Ms. Kim Thi Thuy Ngoc from Viet Nam presented five achievements in 2013 from CEP's capacity development work. First, technical capacity of over 1,300 GMS practitioners was strengthened through 32 capacity building activities. The events were complemented by new online tools and knowledge resources in the expanded CEP website. Second, CEP facilitated knowledge transfer and exchange through thematic international and regional events on green value chain development, green growth, environmental safeguards, ecosystem-based approaches to climate-resilient conservation and valuation of natural capital. Third, CEP has fostered effective partnerships with organizations, including the World Bank, WWF, USAID, GIZ and JICA, to build synergies in project implementation and capacity building. Fourth, WGE collaboration with other sectors was enhanced in 2013; the establishment of cross-sector mechanisms to facilitate implementation of the Green Freight Initiative in Thailand and Viet Nam was a key example. Finally, substantial progress has been made on NSUs. Two NSUs were established in Lao PDR and Viet Nam respectively. Draft LOAs for one NSU and two provincial support units (PSU) in the PRC were negotiated and cleared by the ADB in December. The LOA negotiations with Myanmar and Cambodia were initiated. In Thailand, it was agreed that a steering committee will be established to perform the NSU roles. Key challenges identified in 2013 included limited NSU support to country activities due to their delayed establishment, and limited capacity of NSU staff in different administrative and technical areas. Her presentation is provided in Appendix 8.

14. Mr. Sounadeth Soukchaleum from Lao PDR summarized key achievements in 2013 related to the GMS Online Environmental Portal. The portal has been developed since late 2012 and is a key initiative to strengthen EOC as a knowledge hub on environment. It contains five components –a statistics portal, a maps portal, a GMS events calendar, a section on GMS news, and an online library. During 2013, the statistics portal was enhanced, with new and updated statistics for individual countries and the subregion. A statistics application and a customized factsheet function were also introduced. Work was also initiated to create statistics and map stories for transboundary biodiversity landscapes and corridor pilot sites; this section was subsequently launched in early 2014. A climate change projection interactive map was added to the CEP website, as a result of CEP's collaboration with SEA-START. In addition to regularly updating CEP's own events, news, and resources, starting in 2013 the portal has contained news from the ADB and GMS countries. The event calendar also now contains other environment events happening in the region, including those of the GMS Program and GMS country events. As a result of these enhancements, CEP website visits increased by 32% in

2013 compared to 2012, with the statistics, maps, library, and calendar sections each now having average of 140-200 visits per month. Website use by people based in GMS countries also improved. A key challenge faced was in gathering information and data at different geographical levels, while ensuring that the portal better meets the needs of both national and regional stakeholders. The presentation is attached as Appendix 9.

Statement from Co-financing Partners

15. In a joint statement, the co-financing partners (the Governments of Finland and Sweden and the Nordic Development Fund) recognized that important processes have started at EOC as a result of the self-assessment exercise, the revised modalities for work plans and annual reporting, and the ongoing systems-based review; all of these steps will feed into the upcoming mid-term review of the CEP. The co-financing partners raised key issues for consideration by the WGE including the need to raise the profile of environment within the broader GMS framework; to ensure sustainability of inputs at country level after the end of CEP Phase II; to build a long term vision which ultimately guides the CEP; and to improve future CEP reporting to better incorporate financial information at the component level. In addition, the co-financing partners made suggestions to enhance outcomes of CEP activities on capacity development, climate change, private sector development, and the incorporation of inequality and gender issues in program activities. The joint statement is provided in Appendix 10.

GMS Country Responses

16. Representatives of GMS countries provided country response to the co-financing partners' statement. The Government of Cambodia is incorporating regional and global environmental concerns in the country's environmental strategy and strengthening cross-sector collaboration and management. Financial support and technical capacity building from CEP will benefit such planning process in Cambodia. PRC is committed to ensure the integration of environmental considerations in other sectors and insisted that environmental criteria must be included in the RIF. A key to successfully ensure a high profile of environment in the GMS is for CEP to avoid duplication with other activities and join force with partners to wisely use different mandates and resources to get results. Lessons learned from CEP Phase I can also inform many initiatives in PRC, for example, the management of more than 2,000 national forest reserves in the country. Lao PDR requested more time to review relevant documents before making comments.

17. Myanmar confirmed that CEP Phase II is very consistent with priorities identified in the country's economic and social development strategy. Given that Myanmar's participation in CEP Phase I was limited, the country needs EOC's support in NSU capacity strengthening, as well as in conducting technical consultation on various program activities, in order to participate effectively in Phase II. Given the uncertain political situation in Thailand, the response from the Thai representatives could only be considered as initial. With the Steering Committee agreed and the LOA to be signed, representatives of Thailand are confident that national institutional arrangements are in place for the implementation of CEP Phase II. The representatives also concurred that the impact of economic development on natural resources needs to be measured, and environment should be given a high profile in development policy. In this context, the RIF is being given a priority by GMS countries and has gone through both regional and national consultations. To move the RIF forward, Thailand suggested that a bottom-up approach, in addition to the initial top-down approach, should be used to further guide comprehensive in-country consultation on national RIF investments. Viet Nam confirmed that the four components of CEP are in line with national priorities. While delays in 2013 were related to procedures on both the Government and ADB, all arrangements are now in place to

expedite implementation of CEP Phase II in Viet Nam. Apart from implementation, CEP should also focus on developing a long-term capacity development plan, and formulating a long-term vision for the program.

Discussion

18. The open discussion highlighted extra financing opportunities to scale up CEP work on safeguards, green freight, and the GMS online environmental portal. A question was raised on how the environmental analysis has informed RIF investments in other sectors such as transport, and whether an environmental cost-benefit analysis would be done for the RIF. Another question was raised on the ADB's long term vision for the WGE, and how it compares with those of other GMS working groups.

Session 4: Translating GMS Regional Investment Framework into Action

19. This session was chaired by Mr. Javed Mir, ADB. The Chair started the session introducing environment as an investment sector beyond just a safeguard tradition. He clarified that the session aims to confirm and prioritize the proposed projects in the GMS RIF environment pipeline. The first cut was initiated by ADB and is now being presented to the WGE for discussion. In order to benefit from the knowledge sharing the previous day, the Chair called on Mr. Chuon Chanrithy from Cambodia to summarize the key messages from the knowledge event on *"Managing natural capital to ensure food, energy, and water security"* the second knowledge event jointly organized with the Working Group on Agriculture and this time with support from the Subregional Energy Forum. The summary is provided in Appendix 11.

20. Mr. Sanath Ranawana, ADB, presented the RIF environment pipeline, the proposed criteria, timeline, and process for prioritizing projects. Refer to Appendices 12, 13, and 14 for the details. The Chair added that, while the discussions on the GMS RIF at the knowledge event extended into how the CEP might shape the overall GMS RIF, this session will be bounded by the development partner (DP) activities and how the GMS RIF environment pipeline might complement DPs' work in future iterations. He then invited development partners to deliver brief statements on what they are currently doing for the Mekong subregion, the relevance of their activities to the CEP and in the context of the RIF.

21. The DPs took turns expressing gratitude for the invitation to attend the joint knowledge event and the WGE AM20, as well as renewing their commitment to a sustainable GMS economic program. Conservation International (CI), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), can particularly express this commitment in the near future as fully accredited GEF agencies, and alternative pathways for GMS partners to develop GEF projects. Following are highlights from the DPs statements regarding potential synergies with the GMS RIF:

22. Mr. Robert Mather, IUCN, reported on some of its most recent outputs that can complement the work of the CEP and the GMS RIF environment pipeline. These include the 2012 comprehensive red listing of freshwater species, the 2013 published freshwater biodiversity database, and the implementation of the Ramsar Convention (i.e. Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat) on sites in Champasak and Savannakhet provinces in Lao PDR. Unlike the CEP, IUCN looks at integrated coastal management and related climate change adaptation, and can complement CEP in such areas. Likewise, the IUCN is helping manage the multidonor Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund that might also be tapped by the GMS. His statement is attached as Appendix 15.

23. Mr. Hans Guttman, Mekong River Commission (MRC) Secretariat, reiterated its keen interest in seeing increased coordination between MRC and the GMS Secretariat, as well as the GMS countries and DPs overall, as it highlighted during the 19th GMS Ministerial Conference (MC) in December 2013 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Specific to environmental management and protection, the MRC identified potential synergies in: (i) inland water transport, especially in piloting the regional strategy for handling dangerous/hazardous goods, including through the port projects under the GMS RIF; (ii) knowledge and resource sharing and hydropower development; (iii) climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection, where MRC's aquatic focus could complement the terrestrial focus of CEP; and (iv) environmental planning and management (e.g., through complementation between EOC's multicriteria assessment and MRC's environmental management toolbox; as well as, collaboration within the Environment Operations Network framework). MRC also noted that it was eager to see food security, livelihoods and environmental sustainability more explicitly articulated in the GMS RIF. See Appendix 16.

24. Mr. Peter Cutter, WWF-Greater Mekong, suggested that it can participate in the responsible review and evaluation of the GMS RIF-related projects. Specifically, WWF would like to support and participate in (i) the assessment and monitoring of ecosystem and natural capital indicators for the GMS; (ii) capacity building and application of spatial multicriteria approaches for selecting the maximal infrastructure development scenarios for sustainable GMS development; and, (iii) consolidation and sharing of spatial and biodiversity information to all stakeholders. Already, WWF in the Greater Mekong has produced the following to benefit the subregion: a report on the "Ecosystems in the Greater Mekong: Past Trends, Current Status, Possible Futures", a study of ecosystem service values in the Greater Mekong, and a general ecosystem-based adaptation framework (with support from the World Bank). His statement is in Appendix 17.

25. Mr. Alex Smajgl, CSIRO Ecosystem Sciences (Australia), iterated from the joint knowledge event that institutional change is part of the solution, and that many of the energy-food-water nexus related problems can only be tackled at a regional level. Thus, CSIRO observed that the WGE is well-placed in finding and implementing solutions at this level such as those captured in the GMS RIF. CSIRO suggested that it can contribute to the process through interventions that help bridge the gap between science research and policy. Specifically, CSIRO has much experience in trans-disciplinary research solutions, and can provide capacity building for related tools (e.g., simulating the impact to and effects of land use change). CSIRO can likewise help respond to the needs of policy and decision makers for informed/science-based policy and decision making that will help them consider the various trade-offs brought on by negative externalities. Refer to Appendix 18.

26. Ms. Tracy Farrell, CI, informed the meeting that at present, 90% of CI's operations are in Cambodia, with the remainder in the 3-S (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam river basin). CI intends to grow across the Greater Mekong, identifying its themes of interest broadly in transboundary corridors and balancing conservation-development trade-offs. CI is presently preparing trade-off models in climate change and fisheries in the Tonle Sap lake (Cambodia), and is collaborating on Cambodia's green growth road map. Specifically on the RIF process, CI can participate in capacity building and contribute its experiences on the Watershed Health Index, ecosystem services valuation, payments for environmental services, trust fund development and micro-financing. CI is also interested in growing champions and in promoting south-south exchanges such as through study tours and the like. Her statement is provided in Appendix 19.

27. Mr. Erling Valdemar Holmgren, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), highlighted its potential contributions to filling in the information gaps for GMS, especially drawing on its extensive work in the upstream GMS. These include initiatives in the (i) Brahmaputra–Salween Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative; (ii) the Himalayan Climate Change Adaptation Program (HICAP) involving Yunnan the Upper Salween and Mekong sub-basins; and, (iii) Rural Livelihoods and Climate Change Adaptation in the Himalayas Initiative (Himalaca). ICIMOD intervenes with a broad range of development themes and activities focused on communities, and with livelihood development among its central themes. In connection, ICIMOD observed that livelihood-targeted investments could be more clearly and strongly reflected in the GMS RIF. A copy of his statement is in Appendix 20.

28. Ms. Makiko Yashiro, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), cited several initiatives of UNEP targeting sustainable management of natural capital that could contribute to the work of CEP such as the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Valuation and Accounting of Natural Capital for Green Economy, and the Inclusive Wealth Report. Illegal trade of wildlife and timber is an increasing focus of UNEP. It provides technical and capacity building support to countries in implementing biodiversity-related conventions. UNEP collaborates with ADB and the Government of Cambodia on the GMS BCC and BCI programs through the UNEP/GEF project (CAMPAS). UNEP is also working with the Forest Stewardship Council and the Government of Viet Nam in developing the global and national systems for forest certification for ecosystems service (UNEP/GEF ForCES project). Ms. Yashiro suggested that the WGE and DPs take stock of ongoing initiatives and identify synergies and areas for collaboration in moving forward with the RIF. Her statement is attached as Appendix 21.

29. The Chair thanked the DPs for their continued support to the CEP and other regional cooperation initiatives then opened the floor for discussion.

Discussion

30. **On the RIF consultation process.** Thailand felt that the RIF process was very much driven by top-down approach and suggested conducting bottom-up country consultations to ensure that the framework coincides with the national directions. Cambodia observed that the project formulation may have been skewed toward a top-down approach, and if possible, the objectives of some projects might be revisited based on realities on the ground. The Chair confirmed that the RIF process combines both a top-down and bottom-up approach that includes consultations with sector working groups such as the WGE. Specifically for this meeting, common guidance and in-principle agreements are being sought from the WGE on the prioritization of the RIF environment pipeline projects that can be taken by the GMS Secretariat to the 2nd Meeting of the Task Force for the 5th GMS Summit (held on March 28). Ultimately, since the RIF is only partially financed by ADB's resources, GMS countries can exercise all their options when it comes to moving forward with individual projects.

31. **On dialogue between infrastructure development and natural capital.** WWF suggested that the RIF provides the GMS an opportunity to reflect on planned infrastructure development and its effect on natural capital. However, the projects in the RIF environment pipeline do not appear to directly correlate with the extensive RIF transport pipeline. WWF offered that the environment is naturally correlated to the transport sector (e.g., there are many natural capital considerations for rerouting activities) and raised the question on how the impact of the massive growth in the transport sector might be mitigated. The Chair clarified that environmental, social, and economic parameters are considered in the overall RIF process. In connection, discussions are ongoing on increasing GMS country capacities to apply environmental protocols in the design, planning, financing and implementation of the projects

that will be included in the GMS RIF Implementation Plan, resulting from this RIF project prioritization exercise. Moreover, the same projects will be projected spatially across the transport corridors to be considered against the GMS natural landscapes. These are the entry points for environment to influence the RIF development process.

32. **Perspective from the energy sector.** Mr. Bui Duy Thanh from the Subregional Energy Forum Secretariat (Energy Division of SERD or SEEN), pointed out that the energy sector together with transport put highest pressure on the environment. These two account for more than 85% of the RIF total. In the last five years, SEEN through the Regional Power Trade Coordination Committee and with support from Sida and AFD has implemented two regional TAs with particular emphasis on building capacity of the GMS power sectors to undertake environmental management and planning. He noted the challenge in working across sectors and encouraged CEP to mainstream its activities around the infrastructure sectors. He further suggested the possible inclusion of energy and transport staff in the NSU core team.

33. The Chair concluded the session by confirming that the present RIF output and process result from the 19th MC. Given that the GMS RIF is a living document, there is an opportunity in the second iteration for EOC to facilitate cross-sector synergies. In connection, the Chair will convey the messages from this meeting to the Director of ADB's Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division who is facilitating the overall coordination for the GMS RIF to consider in moving forward. Meanwhile, the Chair called upon the GMS countries to collectively arrive at a conclusion on the prioritization of the RIF environment projects. Simultaneously, he acknowledged the wealth of capacities from the DPs that ensure close collaboration on the GMS RIF.

Session 5: Closing Session

34. The WGE AM20 Resolution was read and adopted. A copy of the Resolution is attached as Appendix 22.

35. Mr. Sanath Ranawana gave a brief summary of the highlights and key results of the meeting. He appreciated the comments and suggestions from the partners and gave EOC's commitment to work out the implementation challenges. Some brief comments which he noted during the discussions are:

- NSU capacity needs to be strengthened further, which is not only to understand about CEP, but also about ADB procedure. So, EOC should take note, and support the NSUs in work plan implementation including procurement and disbursement procedure etc.
- A need to identify entry points that influence the national plan e.g. Cambodia national environmental strategy and action plan, and also make use of that entry point.
- A need to learn and follow up well and effectively the CEP Phase II (using lessons learned from CEP Phase I), e.g. the cabinet approval of the important forest complex in Thailand.
- A need for further regional knowledge sharing and support, e.g. the PRC case of environmental governance.
- The development partners' statement was agreed and recognized generally by the countries; need to address and further strengthen capacity for better and smooth implementation of CEP Phase II.
- Issues on longer term vision and institutional future of the program. We need to follow the GMS structure, and also comply with the system in place because the institutional arrangement and governance structure are complex and process is time consuming.

- Some activities offer significant potential for complements, in which EOC needs to work closely with other development partner when developing/designing activities.

36. Mr. Ranawana also requested the countries to review the RIF prioritization/ranking and provide feedback before the end of April, while in the case of Thailand, EOC will discuss separately with the GMS secretariat in consideration of the political situation faced by the country. The deadline set by the GMS Secretariat for submission of final prioritization and ranking of the RIF environment projects is 1 August 2014.

37. Mr. Hla Maung Thein had asked the countries to confirm the date for the 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (EMM4) as soon as possible as discussed at the 1st Task Force Meeting for the preparation of EMM4 held on March 24. The most preferred option is 27-29 January 2015; a second option is 3-5 February 2015. The 2nd Task Force meeting for EMM4 was tentatively scheduled on 31 July 2014 via videoconference; those without the facility (e.g. Myanmar) will join the EOC in Bangkok, Thailand. The 9th Semi-Annual Meeting of the WGE was tentatively set on 11-13 November 2014 in Bagan, Myanmar. So, the countries need to confirm (after consulting their ministries/cabinets) by April 4 because of the time required for processing approval in Myanmar and logistical preparations when organizing/holding meetings outside Nay Pyi Taw. The countries were also requested to provide feedback on the draft CEP Annual Progress Report by April 4 before finalization and submission to the co-financing partners.

38. Mr. Hla Maung Thein concluded that the meeting was useful and productive in bringing various sectors and partners to learn and discuss about the CEP Phase II, and more importantly in agreeing on the way forward for the improvement of CEP implementation. Finally, he expressed his appreciation to all the delegates and partners for their active participation and contribution to the meeting outcome. In particular, he highlighted the need to have close cooperation and collaboration in order to address the GMS environmental issues.

Appendices

All appendices are hyperlinked, click to access.

[Appendix 1: List of Participants](#)

[Appendix 2: Program of WGE AM20](#)

[Appendix 3: Analysis of Threats and Opportunities in GMS TBLs](#)

[Appendix 4: Summary of CEP Achievements](#)

[Appendix 5: Key Achievements in 2013—Environmental Analysis of GMS RIF](#)

[Appendix 6: Key Achievements in 2013—Safeguards](#)

[Appendix 7: Key Achievements in 2013—Green Freight](#)

[Appendix 8: Key Achievements in 2013—Capacity Development](#)

[Appendix 9: Key Achievements in 2013—GM Online Environmental Portal](#)

[Appendix 10: Development Partner Joint Statement](#)

[Appendix 11: Key Messages from the Joint Knowledge Event](#)

[Appendix 12: RIF—From Environment Pipeline to Implementation](#)

[Appendix 13: Proposed Criteria for Project Prioritization](#)

[Appendix 14: Ranking of RIF Environment Projects](#)

[Appendix 15: Responses from Other Development Partners—IUCN](#)

[Appendix 16: Responses from Other Development Partners—MRC Secretariat](#)

[Appendix 17: Responses from Other Development Partners—WWF](#)

[Appendix 18: Responses from Other Development Partners—CSIRO](#)

[Appendix 19: Responses from Other Development Partners—CI](#)

[Appendix 20: Responses from Other Development Partners—ICIMOD](#)

[Appendix 21: Responses from Other Development Partners—UNEP](#)

[Appendix 22: Resolution of WGE AM20](#)