

Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)

Working Group on Environment

16th Semi-Annual Meeting (WGE - AM 16)

24 - 25 June 2010, Hanoi, Viet Nam

MEETING SUMMARY

24 - 25 June 2010

I. Pre-WGE session on development coordination, 24 June 2010

1. The pre-WGE session was opened by Mr. Pavit Ramachandran, ADB, with a round of introductions, formally welcoming James Peters, the Chief Technical Advisor for EOC, Mr. Sanath Ranawana, the coming ADB project officer for the GMS Core Environment Program as well as newly appointed WGE focal points. Also, the broader presence of national sector agencies other than environment ministries was acknowledged. All presentations from the meeting are available in soft copy on the usb-stick that was handed out during the meeting. They can also be found at <http://www.gms-eoc.org>.
2. The framework for the afternoon was presented by Mr. Peters, who summarized the road map for further development of the draft program document.
3. He then presented the proposed program structure in the evolution of the CEP-BCI in Phase II, emphasizing that the outcomes and sub - outcomes reflect the joint statement that was endorsed by the WGE at the AM-15 and presented the development of new ideas and additions to the impact and outcome statements, the development of sub-outcomes, what roles and responsibilities the national support units will employ, the suggestion to further develop the components into key themes, and the suggested change in order of components.
4. Initial feedback was received from Ros Seilava, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Cambodia, who thanked the EOC for the opportunity to learn more about the program but asked for more information on the first phase in order to fully comprehend the presentation. Tom Clements from Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) welcomed the continued strong focus on conservation.
5. Ms. Cui Dan Dan, PRC, suggested changing the order of key issues to make biodiversity the first key issue together with climate change. Ms. Dan Dan also requested further explanation of how the outcomes and sub-outcomes of the Design and Monitoring Framework (DMF) are connected.
6. Ms. Kim Thi Thuy Ngoc, VN, recommended the EOC for the good work that was presented, but highlighted the need to develop specific program activities in order start identifying potential financing arrangements and partners in Phase II.

7. Dr. Songtam Suksawang, Thailand, stated that the lessons learned from CEP's phase I should be reflected upon and analyzed before moving to phase II. He also recommended that phase II should build on main experiences from phase I.

8. Myanmar's Dr. San Win reinforced the point that GMS countries are increasingly depending on natural resources for economic development and that climate change is a very real threat in this regard. Myanmar wishes to actively participate in future activities and encourages EOC to consider this.

9. Mr. Chuon Chanrithy, Cambodia, iterated that Cambodia has reached results and achievements in environment as a consequence of engagement in CEP's phase I and that Cambodia has already given its endorsement of CEP phase II in principle.

10. **Ms. Helena Ahola, Finland**, congratulated EOC on the program progress and reminded participants of where the program started four years ago. Ms. Ahola iterated that the participatory approach that the development of phase II has employed is the only right way – in this manner collectively moving from 38 proposals and the process of developing clusters towards specific key themes of phase II. Capacity development continues to be very central to the government of Finland and Ms. Ahola appreciated that this is reflected in the development of the program. Looking ahead, the Finnish funding frame for Mekong is increasing, so there might be opportunities for Finland to be involved in phase II. Other relevant projects with Finnish funding include the support to WREA, a component on SEA capacity building, continuation of support to MRC, SUFORD, IUCN Mekong Water Dialogues, developing the national geographical services in Lao PDR, and the Tonle Sap Livelihoods Program (in collaboration with ADB).

11. **Ola Moeller from Sida** supported Ms. Ahola's viewpoints on program development and informed the meeting that the government of Sweden is still developing its next development strategy. Although it is not finalized, regional cooperation will be very central. Swedish elections are scheduled for early September, so development aid focus will be formulated consecutively. Environment and climate change are very likely to continue to be priority areas with the important addition of true regional cooperation with a clear competitive advantage and added benefit.

12. **Mr. Htin Aung Moe, UNEP**, highlighted the importance of the GMS government ownership and reinstated the country ownership continues to be very central as the program develops further. Within CEP-BCI, UNEP is heavily involved in EPA component 3, and is able to work actively in Myanmar, also as part of the regional climate change adaptation knowledge network. Consolidating experiences from phase I, and continuing to strengthen the work in climate change also the Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) sees a strong complementarity with the environmental planning theme of the envisioned phase II.

13. **Mr. Dao Huy Giap from the Mekong River Commission (MRC)** presented key achievements and areas of focus looking ahead and suggested that areas where close collaboration could be further explored could include the work on the SEAs that are being carried out in connection with the 11 proposed mainstream dams, Future SEAs related to water sector, benefit sharing and payment for ecological services, watershed management, conservation of environment and biodiversity.

14. **Mr. Colin McQuistan, WWF Greater Mekong Programme** presented a proposal that the WWF is currently planning to submit to secure funding from GEF-5. The program proposal covers the GMS countries and seeks to enable conditions to conserve and sustainably achieve

multiple environmental benefits from improved management of forest and freshwater ecosystems in the GMS.

15. **Ms. Ornsaran from ECO-Asia** presented the program as well as a specific suggestion to collaborate closer with the GMS CEP-BCI on the SEAs that are planned specifically building capacity in the hydropower sector. A knowledge sharing and scoping workshop was flagged with the possibility of exploring twinning partnerships to share knowledge and experiences among the different countries within the GMS.

16. Mr. Chuon Chanrithy, MoE Cambodia, thanked the presenters for their solid presentations and was especially interested in ECO-Asia's proposal as it answers well to Cambodia's environment minister's address during the second Environment Ministers Meeting.

17. **Ms. Lauren Sorkin, ADB**, gave a short overview presentation on the programs and activities within ADB that offer CEP further potential for collaboration, coordination and/or optimizing synergies. She also touched upon the funds within ADB that can potentially contribute to activities, especially within climate change adaptation and mitigation.

18. After a brief wrap-up, the pre-WGE session ended, and ADB was host at a welcome reception.

II. The 16th Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Environment (WGE-AM 16) 25 June 2010

SESSION I: WELCOME AND AGENDA SETTING

19. The 16th Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Environment (WGE - AM 16), was held on 25 June 2010 in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The meeting was attended by all WGE countries, ADB, co-financing and implementing partners, observers and EOC. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Nguyen Van Tai, ISPONRE, Viet Nam and Mr. Pavit Ramachandran, ADB and was opened with remarks given by vice minister Mr. Nguyen Thai Lai and Country Director, Mr. Ayumi Koninshi.

20. In his opening remarks, Vice Minister Lai welcomed all meeting participants to Hanoi and opened his address by bringing the meeting participants' attention to the significance of each country's obligation to offer inputs to the strategic direction that the GMS Core Environment Program takes.

21. Mr. Ayumi Konishi, ADB VRM Country Director, also welcomed participants and emphasized that as the strategic plan the Working Group on Environment is planning its second phase, the GMS Economic Cooperation Program is similarly planning the next phase of its involvement and support to national and regional economic development of the GMS countries. He stressed that the alignment of thematic planning, discussions and strategies was necessary and emphasized the importance of the WGE meeting in the run up to the next Ministerial Meeting, which will take place in Hanoi, 19-20 August 2010.

22. Mr. Pavit Ramachandran, ADB, presented the meeting agenda. Based on CEP/BCI progress presented by the EOC team, discussions would evolve on achievements and current implementation status, lessons learnt, issues and challenges that could benefit program implementation during the next 6 month period. Following this, Mr. Jim Peters would lay out the

key points from country consultations and further refining of the strategic direction as well as bench marks in measuring progress.

III. SESSION II: CEP/BCI: Program Progress for the Supplemental Phase

23. Mr. Iain Watson, EOC, reported on progress for the period October 2009 – March 2010, highlighting significant achievements in the SEA, BCI and EPA components, climate change and capacity building and further institutional strengthening through coordination with other GMS working groups, and Ms. Mai reported on the ongoing BCI PPTA process, which is being carried out in three countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam) and what progress has been made, as well as laying out the road map for the remaining part of the year.

24. Mr. Chuon Chanrithy, MoE, Cambodia thanked Mr. Watson for reporting on the progress made so far. Cambodia is concerned about the tight time frame of implementation both for ongoing activities within CEP and also for the BCI-PPTA. Ms. Mai responded that it would be useful to include cross-country support meetings that allowed for coordination and support.

25. Mr. Ros Seilava, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Cambodia, commented that he appreciated the importance of the work of the CEP-BCI in its efforts to streamline environment into other sectors in each country in the GMS. MEF acknowledged that involving other ministries such as MEF will strengthen the coordination between sector agencies. This would also send a strong signal as an input to the 5th development plan that the GMS is moving towards a more coordinated effort to improve socio-economic performance in the GMS. Mr. Seilava expressed disappointment in the level of participation that had been employed by other agencies than the environment ministries so far in the member countries – and suggested that the CEP employ more flexibility in finding ways to get substantial inputs from a wider range of partners.

26. Mr. Thun Thavrak, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia, shared his observation on how the development stakeholders and GMS countries should be grappling with the socio-economic progress without damaging the environment in the region. So far, from his point of view, both countries and development partners have dealt with environmental issues in a fragmented manner. These issues are interlinked and should be addressed in coordination. The effort should be more coordinated and harmonized.

27. Ms. Cui Dan Dan, PR China, thanked for the report and requested more support from EOC and also from WGE countries. For projects that are being implemented in other countries it would be useful to have access to project information, outputs and outcomes.

28. Ms. Kim Thi Thuy Ngoc, Viet Nam, commented that it was useful to see the achievements of the last project period. However, Viet Nam would like to have a more active role in project implementation and asked to be informed of all activities that are ongoing in their country to most effectively support coordination. Ms. Ngoc added that capacity is still needed in core areas such as EPA for the national WGE members to add value.

29. Dr. Songtam Suksawang, Thailand, commented that the recent political unrest in Thailand meant that there had been a renewed focus on biodiversity conservation – and climate change will increasingly continue to be a focus area. REDD and other such approaches can benefit the region's biodiversity landscapes). When talking about Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES), Thailand is looking to Viet Nam.

30. Myanmar's Dr. San Win informed the meeting that ADB included Myanmar on a round of country consultations in planning the GMS Strategy 2012 – 2016, and areas that were discussed included climate change adaptation measures, green growth initiatives.

31. Ms. Marjaana Kokkonen, Finland, reiterated that Finland saw a large improvement in the reporting structure, and Mr. Ola Moller, Sweden, supplemented that he had learned much from the presentation and took note of the strong ownership of the program which was encouraging to see.

32. Mr. Moe, UNEP, commented that he would like to see how the progress and achievements CEP-BCI could be reflected in each country's strategic framework.

VI. Session III: CEP/BCI: Program Progress for Phase II

33. Mr. Peters, EOC, presented the draft design and monitoring framework (DMF), the structure of it and carefully laid out key points of discussion. He iterated that the DMF was still work in progress and invited inputs and feedback from the meeting. The presentation prompted the following responses:

34. Cui Dan Dan commented on the SO1, component 1, the WGE might invite other WGs such as tourism and agriculture to reflect on this group's progress in relation to this. On EOC and NSUs, although the NSUs will be established, the onus should still be on EOC as they will continue to deliver technical advice and backstopping.

35. Ms. Ngoc, Viet Nam, commented that ISPONRE is organizing a workshop on the three R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and other sector working groups could be invited to give inputs as a direct response.

36. Ms. Dan Dan, PRC, found it gratifying that the strategic objectives and sub-outcomes reflect the statement that was agreed on last year, but requested that the four components in phase II directly reflect the four focus areas that the WGE agreed on last year. PRC also recommended that EOC continue to look for ways to initiate activities in Myanmar as phase II is finalized.

37. Ms. Ahola, Finland, thanked for the DMF that was shared which Finland has requested for a while. This will also support the mid-term evaluation that Finland is completing later this year. Her first impression was that the DMF was very detailed and a bit difficult to comprehend. It should be seen as a process, so that when the first draft has been completed, it should relate to the implementation plan and then be revised.

38. Dr. Songtam, Thailand, stressed the importance of diversifying the detailed activities for each country and suggested that a needs assessment could be part of the way forward as the individual country needs are different. Drawing on ECO-Asia's presentation, looking at twinning opportunities could be useful.

39. Cambodia expressed concerns with the project design framework and was concerned that the DMF will be so complex that it will be difficult to convince other agencies with other agendas of the relevance of the program – as a result, the DMF could be challenging to use as a document that offers convincing arguments for broad sector participation.

40. Viet Nam was looking at the conservation component and missed conservation and more specifically looking at issues such as air pollution at the expense of climate change.

41. Lao PDR agreed with the comments from Finland and brought forward the importance of finding a way of reflecting country priorities in the DMF.
42. Dr. Win, Myanmar agreed with Lao PDR, Thailand and PRCs comments and asked that WGE explore ways to finance activities in Myanmar.
43. Ms. Ahola, Finland, highlighted that SEA is an important tool but there are also others. To Finland, the central point is to find ways to support environmentally sustainable development in regional cooperation.
44. Mr. Pokhrel, EOC, informed the meeting of the ongoing collaboration with RPTCC and RETA 6440 and how activities are being coordinated to provide a platform for strengthened responses to environment pressures posed by development.
45. The meeting then broke up into two groups, the WGE members gathering to conduct their closed door session while the remaining participants were served coffee.
46. Upon reassembly, Ms. Mai, Viet Nam, informed the meeting about the outcomes of the closed door session for the WGE, and passed on the revised version of the draft resolutions.
47. In closing, Mr. Ramachandran stressed the importance of focus in the development of phase II in order to build on the regional consultations, the joint statement that were the result of the 15th annual Working Group on Environment Meeting and the environmental priorities of each national government in the GMS.
48. **Joint statement from Sweden and Finland:** The development partners representing governments of Sweden and Finland opened their joint statement by stressing that they had enjoyed both presentations and discussions during the meeting and thanked everybody for inputs and active participation. They noted with pleasure the inter-ministerial presence from some countries at the WGE and expressed that they hoped this practice would continue in the coming meetings. They also noted the steps that had been taken to simplify management and reporting structure in phase I which was appreciated.
49. On phase II, the development partners thanked for the invitation to participate in the development of phase II strategy and the early opportunity to influence the revisions of the design and monitoring framework. Exploring additional opportunities for funding of phase II was encouraged.
50. On recruitment, the partners stressed the importance of identifying the best candidate through a fair and transparent recruitment process. The further development of a more interactive web site was welcomed, and the upcoming evaluation/appraisal in November was mentioned. Mr. Moeller clarified that Sida's decision on continuation of funding would be finalized following elections in Sweden in September 2010.
51. In closing, Dr. Tai congratulated participants with the successful planning of phase II, and suggested that the semi-annual be held in Ho Chi Minh City or Vung Tau **in the last week of November 2010.**