



This GMS e-Updates is a regular publication to provide readers with an update on activities and major developments in pursuit of accelerated development of the countries sharing the Mekong River

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SIXTH ECONOMIC CORRIDORS FORUM REVIEWS ITS ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND THE WAY FORWARD



ECF-6 Heads of Delegation: (L-R) Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Lao PDR, Viet Nam, Myanmar, Thailand and ADB

The Sixth GMS Economic Corridors Forum was held on 8 August 2014 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam. The Forum had the theme "Developing Economic Corridors through Transport and Trade Facilitation & Economic Zones". The Forum was attended by over 150 participants consisting of GMS Ministers and other officials of key central government agencies of the GMS countries, and representatives of the private sector, international development organizations and other institutions.

The Forum represented a milestone for the Economic Corridors Forum (ECF), as it marked the completion of the first full cycle of hosting of the Forum by all six GMS countries. It also provided an opportune time for the ECF to take stock of what it has achieved so far, to review its role and ultimate goals, to assess the challenges ahead, and to identify the best ways to move forward. Thus, the meeting discussed a review of the experience, achievements and challenges of its first six years of existence, and considered certain

broad strategic directions for the future. Among these is the refocusing of the ECF agenda on priority issues for transforming transport corridors into economic corridors, namely transport and trade facilitation, and development of special economic zones. The high-level strategic dialogue among the countries during the Forum reflected their strong willingness and capacity to cooperate on further developing the GMS economic corridors, and the continued relevance of the ECF as a platform to address multi-sectoral issues and challenges.

As a side event of the meeting, Thailand and Viet Nam also signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Establishment of the Greater Mekong Railway Association (GMRA), thus completing the signing of the MOU by all the GMS countries. The GMRA is the body that is intended to promote coordination of the railway development plans of GMS countries and to enhance railway connectivity in the subregion. [Read News Release.](#)

Upcoming Events for 2014

September

- Third Meeting of the Urban Development Task Force (Vientiane, Lao PDR, 11-12 September)

October

- Fourth Meeting of the Task Force for the 5th GMS Summit (Bangkok, Thailand, 9-10 October)
- Thirteenth Meeting of the Working Group on Human Resource Development (Ha Noi, Viet Nam, 29-30 October)

November

- Ninth Semi-Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Environment back-to-back with the Third Task Force Meeting for the Preparation of the 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (Bagan, Myanmar, 11-13 November)
- Thirty Fourth Meeting of the GMS Tourism Working Group (Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, 18-19 November)
- Seventeenth Meeting of the GMS Regional Power Trade Coordination Committee (venue and date to be confirmed)

December

- Fifth Meeting of the Task Force for the 5th GMS Summit (Bangkok, Thailand, 19 December)
- Fifth GMS Summit (Bangkok, Thailand, 19-20 December)

Upcoming Events for 2015

January

- Fourth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 27-29 January)

5th GMS Summit Preparation

FIRST MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE FOR THE 5TH GMS SUMMIT

(via videoconference, Manila, Philippines, 10 February 2014)

The meeting (i) firmed up the dates, venue, and theme of the 5th GMS Summit; (ii) generated ideas on the program/agenda, component activities, deliverables, and other arrangements for the 5th GMS Summit; (iii) considered the proposed basic elements and approaches for the preparation of an Implementation Plan for the GMS Regional Investment

Framework (2013-2022); and (iv) discussed the GMS calendar of events for the year leading up to the 5th GMS Summit in December 2014. The Meeting was attended by the GMS National Coordinators or representatives from Cambodia, the PRC, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam, and by ADB staff. Myanmar joined the meeting via Internet call.

SECOND MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE FOR THE 5TH GMS SUMMIT

(Chiang Mai, Thailand, 28 March 2014)

The meeting (i) finalized the dates, venue, and theme, program/agenda, component activities, key deliverables, and other arrangements for the 5th GMS Summit; (ii) firmed up the approaches for and initiated the process of preparation of the Implementation Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation System for the GMS Regional Investment Framework; and (iii) initiated

the preparation for the Sixth GMS Economic Corridors Forum. The theme of the 5th GMS Summit is “Committed to Inclusive and Sustainable Development in the GMS.” The Meeting was attended by the GMS National Coordinators and/or representatives from Cambodia, the PRC, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, and by ADB staff.

THIRD MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE FOR THE 5TH GMS SUMMIT

(Han Noi, Viet Nam, 7 August 2014)

The meeting was attended by the GMS National Coordinators and/or representatives from GMS countries and ADB staff to: (i) review the status of administrative and logistical preparations for the 5th GMS Summit; (ii) finalize the program/agenda, component activities, deliverables, and other arrangements for the 5th GMS Summit; (iii) take stock of the progress of preparation of the Implementation Plan and Monitoring and Evaluation System for the GMS Regional Investment Framework; (iv) consider the proposed topics for the Leaders' Retreat and preliminary content outline of the Draft 5th Summit Joint Declaration; and (v) review final preparations for the Sixth GMS Economic Corridors Forum.



Director James Lynch co-chairs the meeting with Dr. Porametee Vimolsiri, Deputy Secretary General, NESDB, Thailand.

Sector Updates

TRANSPORT

EIGHTEENTH GMS SUBREGIONAL TRANSPORT FORUM (Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam 23-24 July 2014)

The Meeting's key objective was to finalize and endorse an Implementation Plan (IP) for the Regional Investment Framework (RIF) comprising highest priority transport projects identified in the RIF. The preparation of the IP as a pragmatic, achievable, and dynamic plan to effectively implement the RIF was mandated by the 19th GMS Ministerial Conference held in December 2013.

At the meeting, the country delegations reviewed, discussed, and finalized the list of highest priority or flagship projects,

which were selected based on a rational and agreed upon set of criteria, and which were taken up in a round of consultations with the countries' transport authorities that were conducted earlier in the year. Apart from the priority transport projects

for inclusion in the IP, the Meeting also discussed recent Greater Mekong Railway Association (GMRA); and discussed the findings of an initial review of the GMS Transport Sector Strategy (2006-2015).



ENERGY

SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE GMS REGIONAL POWER TRADE COORDINATION COMMITTEE (RPTCC-16) (Siem Reap, Cambodia, 25-26 June 2014)

RPTCC-16 which was held back-to-back with the 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Performance Standards and Grid Code (WGPG-4) was organized by Cambodia's Ministry of Mines and Energy in cooperation with ADB and attended by RPTCC and WGPG members, and representatives of ADB and other development partners. RPTCC-16 witnessed the opening and commencement of evaluation of bids for the venue for the headquarters of the Regional Power Coordination Center (RPCC) which will serve as a permanent institution to enhance regional power trade and implement regional power interconnection in the GMS. The Updated Articles of Association of the RPCC was presented and reviewed by RPTCC members. The GMS countries

provided updates on power development plans focusing on cross-border projects while the development partners discussed the continuing assistance to promote power trade in the GMS. RPTCC-16 also endorsed the revised energy sector priority projects (investments and technical assistance) as part of the Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan.

WGPG-4 discussed the (i) consolidated gap analysis for regional performance standards

(in one format); (ii) draft implementation plan with investment requirements of the gap filling measures (legal, institutional and technical) by each country; and (iii) necessary work for transmission regulation and metering arrangements. [Read Summary of Proceedings.](#)



ENVIRONMENT

FIRST TASK FORCE MEETING FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE 4TH GMS ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS' MEETING *(Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 24 March 2014)*

The meeting was attended by representatives from the environment and other relevant ministries of the GMS countries to: (i) review the concept note for the 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (EMM-4) and initial draft agenda; (ii) prepare a concept for a follow on knowledge event, building on the key messages from the knowledge event held the next day (25 March); (iii) present options for possible side events, communications and outreach plan for EMM-4; and (iv) discuss a proposed outline of the Joint Ministerial Statement.

SECOND TASK FORCE MEETING FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE 4TH GMS ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS' MEETING *(via videoconference, Bangkok, Thailand, 31 July 2014)*

The objectives of the meeting are to: (i) present and agree on the concept and agenda for the EMM-4 and associated events, including the Natural Capital Dialogue and preceding Business and Transboundary Biodiversity Landscape Forum, and Youth Environment Meeting on Day 1; (ii) present details on communications and outreach; (iii) discuss logistical arrangements; (iv) update on status of EMM-4 deliverables; and (v) review contents/first draft of the EMM-4 Joint Ministerial Statement.

AGRICULTURE

ELEVENTH MEETING OF THE GMS WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE (WGA-11) *(Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 26 March 2014)*

WGA-11 was held back-to-back with the 20th Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment (WGE-20). These meetings were preceded by a Joint WGA-WGE Knowledge Event on "Managing Natural Capital to Ensure Food, Energy, and Water Security" held on 25 March 2014.

WGA-11 reviewed the 2013 accomplishments and the work plan for 2014 under the Core Agriculture Support Program Phase 2 (CASP 2). There are four technical assistance projects that are supporting a wide range of activities under the CASP with funding support from Sida, NDF, PRC, and ADB. These activities relate to transboundary animal disease control, biotechnology and biosafety, development and expansion of the Agriculture Information Network Service – including satellite-based drought monitoring and warning system in the GMS, rural renewable energy, cross-border agri-trade facilitation, efficient utilization of biomass for scale-up production of clean bioenergy and organic soil amendments, Nitrogen-cycle management, piloting of investment models, capacity building through study tours and participation in regional events, and development of knowledge products including information, education, and communication materials, among others. The meeting was briefed in detail about the prioritization of agriculture projects in line with the preparation of the Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan (RIF IP) as a key deliverable for the 5th GMS Summit. The WGA Secretariat presented a project concept for a proposed GMS Agri-business Value Chain project as the first agriculture sector project under the RIF IP.



TWENTIETH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GMS WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT *(Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 26 March 2014)*

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 meeting reported on the highlights of the Core Environment

Program achievements and progress in 2013, discussed how to translate the GMS Regional Investment Framework into action, and agreed on priorities and areas for regional environmental collaboration. [Read Summary of Proceedings.](#)

JOINT AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT EVENT

JOINT KNOWLEDGE EVENT ON “MANAGING NATURAL CAPITAL TO ENSURE FOOD, ENERGY AND WATER SECURITY” (Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 25 March 2014)

The GMS face losing recent development gains unless countries invest more to secure natural resource stocks. Recognizing the environmental costs of rapid economic development, GMS countries have put in place sustainable development and green growth strategies in recent years. However, operationalizing them remains a major challenge. The knowledge event highlighted opportunities from increased collaboration across agriculture, energy, and environment sectors and demonstrated the crucial role this collaboration play in ensuring food, energy and water security in the subregion. Presentations and discussion sessions provided an overview of the issues related to the food-energy-water nexus, highlighted opportunities from the management of natural capital, and illustrated best practice examples from the region.



The Joint Knowledge Event emphasized the need for increasing inter-sectoral coordination and linkages towards enhanced policy and decision making on food, energy, and water security. The knowledge event also served as a venue for sharing information about the proposed GMS Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan and the subsequent steps that the various sector working groups need to take towards prioritizing the pipeline of investment and technical assistance projects and defining an operational Monitoring & Evaluation system within the timeline leading to the 5th GMS Summit in December 2014.

The meeting was attended by more than 160 delegates, including senior agriculture, energy, and environment officials from the six GMS countries, as well as representatives from ADB and other major development organizations. It is a lead up event to the 4th GMS Environment Ministers Meeting to be held in January 2015, also in Nay Pyi Taw. The event was co-organized by Myanmar's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, as well as ADB's Core Agriculture Support Program and Core Environment Program. [Read Summary of Proceedings.](#)

TOURISM

THIRTY THIRD MEETING OF THE GMS TOURISM WORKING GROUP (TWG-33) (Mandalay, Myanmar, 9 June 2014)

TWG-33 was held on 9 June 2014 back-to-back with closed meetings of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) Board held on 9 and 10 June, and the 2014 Mekong Tourism Forum held on 11 June. TWG-33 reviewed the status of activities under the Sub-regional Marketing and Product Development Program to promote the subregion as a single destination, including improvement of the Mekong Tourism website, organization of GMS multi-country familiarization trips for the media and tour operators focusing on cultural and natural heritage, and a Golden Triangle Triathlon held in May 2014 and participated in by athletes from several countries. Tourism human resource development-related activities under regional and bilateral frameworks proceeded including training programs held in Yunnan Province for tourism officials from Myanmar and Viet Nam. A new technical assistance funded by ADB to strengthen the Mekong Tourism Coordination Office is underway to support the preparation of key indicators for monitoring GMS tourism performance for reporting to GMS Senior Officials, Ministers, and Leaders, as well as the preparation of a new MTCO operations plan to strengthen its support to the TWG and the overall GMS tourism cooperation program, and a new Explore Mekong strategy to better respond to emerging markets and trends. TWG-33 also endorsed the prioritized list of investment and technical assistance projects for the tourism sector under the GMS Regional Investment Framework Implementation Plan.

Closed meetings of the MTCO Board held on 9 and 10 June 2014 discussed administrative and financial aspects of its operations, and conducted interviews of shortlisted applicants leading to the final selection of the new MTCO Executive Director who will take over the position in July 2014.

The 2014 Mekong Tourism Forum was held on 11 June 2014 with the theme “*Tourism and the Future of GMS Heritage*”. Over 150 participants from the public and private sectors discussed and shared ideas on promoting, protecting, and conserving natural and cultural heritage of the GMS. The Forum was held in conjunction with a UNWTO conference on heritage held on 12 June 2014.

TRANSPORT AND TRADE FACILITATION

GMS TRANSPORT AND TRADE FACILITATION DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS’ MEETING (ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines, 22-23 April 2014)

The First GMS Transport and Trade Facilitation (TTF) Development Partners’ (DPs) Meeting was held to achieve:

- (i) common understanding on the forward direction of GMS TTF and how it fits within the GMS Strategic Framework and its Regional Investment Framework;
- (ii) clarity on the inter-connection of the ASEAN and GMS TTF agenda and practical implications for synergy;
- (iii) identification of opportunities for DPs and the entry points where DPs can add the most value to TTF; and
- (iv) clear understanding of DP’s interest and priorities in supporting TTF and areas of collaboration to ensure effective and efficient interventions.

The DPs agreed that enhanced collaboration and coordination among the DPs is essential to achieve results effectively and efficiently

supporting TTF measures in GMS, and agreed to institutionalize the DP meeting on annual basis. All DPs reaffirmed their commitment and support in moving forward TTF in GMS, and in the process, help the CLMV countries to become full-fledged members of the ASEAN Economic Community.

WORKSHOP ON THE ASSESSMENT OF IMPLICATIONS TO LAO PDR OF THE TRILATERAL ROAD TRANSPORT MOU ON THE EXCHANGE OF TRAFFIC RIGHTS IN THE NORTH SOUTH ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (Vientiane, Lao PDR, 21-22 May 2014)

The objectives of the stakeholder consultation workshop on the Trilateral Road Transport MOU in the North South Economic Corridor (NSEC) at Mohan-Boten and Houayxay-Chiang Khong Border Crossing Points were to:

- (i) assess the implications for transit country, Lao PDR of implementing the exchanges of traffic rights at the North South Economic Corridor in light of the recent opening of the Chiang Khong-Houayxay Bridge connecting Thailand, and Lao PDR in December 2013;
- (ii) gather suggestions from stakeholders on potential mechanisms to enable Lao PDR to achieve maximum benefits from transport and trade facilitation cooperation mechanisms with PRC and Thailand; and
- (iii) share relevant information on global best practices and assess if these would applicable to the situation of Lao PDR.

The challenges of facilitating transport in the NSEC were successfully identified and there was consensus among the stakeholders that it is necessary to secure adequate compensation and benefits for the local economy and to ensure local development in Lao PDR.

Key points raised during the workshop include the: need to improve Lao freight industry competitiveness, need for new sources of revenue for road maintenance, need for mechanisms to mitigate road accidents, need to improve customs procedures and to address informal trade, and the need for a more in-depth follow-up quantitative study.

WORKSHOP ON THE EXCHANGES OF THE TRAFFIC RIGHTS AMONG THE PRC, LAO PDR, AND THAILAND ALONG NORTH-SOUTH ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (Beijing, PRC 18-19 June 2014)

The People’s Republic of China (PRC), Lao PDR, and Thailand had a tripartite workshop on the exchanges of traffic rights along the North South Economic Corridor (NSEC) on 18-19 June in Beijing, PRC and conducted the following:

- (i) gaps and needs assessment and updated the progress and the status of transport and trade facilitation initiatives along the NSEC following the recent opening of the Chiang Khong-Houayxay Bridge connecting Thailand, and Lao PDR last December 2013;
- (ii) in-depth discussions on specific issues and concerns related to the trilateral MOU on the exchanges of traffic rights in the NSEC; and
- (iii) sharing of outputs from the recent Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on the Assessment of Implications of the Trilateral Exchanges of Traffic Rights to Lao PDR, on 21 May 2014 in Vientiane.

The three countries noted that promoting connectivity in the NSEC would yield long run positive impacts by improving access to markets and services. However, it would also be necessary to take into account specific needs, concerns, and operational issues to ensure its successful and sustainable implementation and to mitigate potential

Key points raised include: access to seaports for Lao PDR, extension of border hours, utilization of e-customs seals, joint establishment of cross-border passenger services, implementation of guarantee arrangements, and resolving operations issues on the issuance of road transport permits. The countries have achieved consensus on the latest draft version of the tripartite MOU.

WORKSHOP ON CROSS-BORDER TRANSPORT AGREEMENT REVIEW AND MID-TERM REVIEW OF TRANSPORT AND TRADE FACILITATION (*ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines, 10-11 July 2014*)

The workshop was organized to:

- (i) solicit views and inputs from relevant government agencies and validate the initial findings of the reviews to ensure the reviews are comprehensive and objective;
- (ii) share relevant information on best practices on transport and trade facilitation (TTF); and
- (iii) identify key issues, findings and ways forward on cross-border transport agreement (CBTA) and next phase of direction and activities to support TTF.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the participants agreed that the CBTA remains relevant to facilitate cross-border movements of goods, vehicles and people among the GMS countries. However, the need to update and upgrade the CBTA to make it more efficient and relevant to the current best practices was recognized. Regional and multilateral agreements can offer both reference points and good practices to help improve the CBTA.

Upcoming Events

THIRD MEETING OF THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE (*Vientiane, Lao PDR, 11-12 September 2014*)

The meeting will mainly review the draft GMS Urban Development Strategy and its Implementation Plan which is targeted to be finalized for GMS Ministers' ad referendum endorsement by November 2014 and presentation to GMS Leaders in the 5th Summit in December 2014. The Task Force will also discuss results of the GMS Sixth Economic Corridors Forum regarding Special Economic Zones and Cross Border Economic Zones and agree on the way forward of the GMS Urban Development Strategy and the Task Force as a GMS institutional mechanism.

FOURTH MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE FOR THE 5TH GMS SUMMIT (*Bangkok, Thailand, 9-10 October*)

The meeting will update progress of preparations for all component activities of the 5th GMS Summit and discuss the required actions to complete the Summit deliverables, and finalize logistics arrangements.

THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (*Ha Noi, Viet Nam 29-30 October 2014*)

The GMS Working Group on Human Resource Development is holding its 13th Meeting on 29-30 October 2014 in Ha Noi, Viet Nam to review the progress of implementation of the GMS Human Resource Development Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2013-2017 and the ADB-funded Regional Policy Advisory Technical Assistance that supports its country-level implementation. The meeting will also discuss the strengthening of institutional support towards value addition of subregional cooperation in HRD

activities that involve significant economies of scale and public goods such as regional disease surveillance, regional labor market information, and highly specialized training and research for capacity building.

NINTH SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GMS WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT BACK-TO-BACK WITH THE THIRD TASK FORCE MEETING FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE 4TH GMS ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS' MEETING (*Bagan, Myanmar, 11-13 November 2014*)

A Senior Officials' Meeting to update on the preparatory work done for the 4th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting will be held, followed by a technical working session and field visit.

FIFTH GMS SUMMIT (*Bangkok, Thailand, 19-20 December 2014*)

The GMS Summit is the highest forum in the GMS Economic Cooperation Program that serves as the venue where the GMS Leaders can (i) review and assess the progress made under the Program, (ii) renew their commitment to subregional cooperation and its goals, (iii) provide support at the highest political level to the Program and its projects and activities, and (iv) provide broad directions for landmark or key initiatives under the GMS Program. Three Task Force meetings have been held to firm up details and preparations for the 5th GMS Summit with the theme "Committed to Inclusive and Sustainable Development in the GMS". Prior to the Summit Ceremonies and Leaders' Retreat on 20 December, Summit component events will be held on 19 December as follows: (i) Investment Forum, (ii) Development Partners' Round Table, (iii) Second Youth Forum, and (iv) 5th Meeting of the Task Force for the 5th GMS Summit.

FOURTH GMS ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS' MEETING (*Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 27-29 January 2015*)

The Fourth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (EMM4) will bring together environmental leaders from GMS countries to take stock of natural

resources and environmental status and trends, and discuss future directions for regional cooperation to expedite the transition to a green economy. It will be a 3-day event consisting of the following activities: Senior Officials' Meeting, Transboundary Biodiversity Landscape Forum, Business Forum, and Youth

Environment Meeting on day 1; Natural Capital Dialogue on day 2; and EMM4 and Environment Ministers' Retreat on day 3.

Just Published

June 2014



Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program: Overview of the GMS Regional Investment Framework (2013-2022)

Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program: Regional Investment Framework Pipeline of Potential Projects (2013-2022)

The Regional Investment Framework puts into operation the new Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Program Strategic Framework (2012-2022) that was approved at the 4th GMS Summit in December 2011. The Regional Investment Framework translates the strategic directions of the GMS-Strategic Framework into a pipeline of investment and technical assistance projects for the third decade of the GMS Program, from 2013 to 2022.

May 2014



Climate Change and Rural Communities in the Greater Mekong Subregion: A Framework for Assessing Vulnerability and Adaptation Options

The objective of this report is to stimulate discussion among practitioners and researchers to improve the assessment framework developed under the Greater Mekong Subregion Core Environment Program as a tool to support climate change adaptation planning in the Greater Mekong Subregion.

April 2014



Assessing Impact in the Greater Mekong Subregion: An Analysis of Regional Cooperation Projects

A range of Greater Mekong Subregion Program projects in the road transport, health, tourism, and energy sectors are analyzed to assess their socioeconomic impact.

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