



**Greater Mekong Subregion
Environment Operations Center**

**Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)
Working Group on Environment 2nd Semi-Annual Meeting
(WGE SAM 2)**

**28 November, 2007
Videoconference**

MEETING SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The GMS Working Group on Environment 2nd Semi-Annual Meeting (WGE SAM-2) was held on 28 November 2007 via videoconference at ADB resident missions in Cambodia, PRC, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam and ADB Headquarters as the host. WGE representatives from Myanmar extended their apologized for not being able to attend the meeting. The participants list is attached as Appendix 1. It was recognized that it was the first time videoconferencing was tried for a WGE meeting and some basic meeting rules were established to enable a smooth discussion.

2. The meeting was chaired by and Mrs. Keobang A. Keola, Lao PDR and Mr. Javed H Mir, ADB during the morning session and Mr. Tang Dingding, PRC on the afternoon session. A draft agenda had been circulated. Lao PDR proposed to move the agenda item Report of the 1st EMM TF Meeting to the morning. The item New Proposal for Considerations was consequently moved to the afternoon session. With these changes the agenda was adopted (see Appendix 2). Meeting documentation had been forwarded to all participants before the meeting. These documents can also be downloaded from the EOC webpage www.gms-eoc.org.

II. REPORT ON WGE AM13 RESOLUTIONS

3. Prof. Dawood Ghaznavi, EOC, reported on the status of resolutions agreed on at the WGE AM13. All meeting participants expressed their strong appreciation of the progress against the Resolutions from the WGE AM13. Lao PDR requested they be provided with a copy of the Carbon Neutral Transport Corridor draft report before the UNFCCC COP13 Lao PDR also requested they be involved in the Pre-feasibility study on Risk and Vulnerability of Climate Change in BCI pilot sites. EOC agreed to take immediate action on both items.

4. PRC inquired if a deadline was set for comments on the TAP note of Future of EOC that was circulated during November. No deadline has been set since the TAP note is intended as a background paper preparing for a proposed discussion workshop on EOC future tentatively in March 2008. Viet Nam requested that any result of the CEP work in Preah Vihear be shared among WGE members. Viet Nam also expressed interest in participating in the CEP Waste Management work in Yunnan. EOC agreed to both these requests.

III. CEP UPDATE

5. Progress reports of CEP Components 1-5 were presented by respective EOC Task Leaders. In addition the EOC GIS Specialist gave an update on GIS developments. The COO also reported on the CEP Budget & Expenditures. On the latter the COO reported on the difficulties of implementing partners sending expenditures reports and cash replenishment requests every six months (as scheduled in LoAs), causing extreme workloads at EOC/ADB. It was suggested that monthly reporting would even the workload and help processing the liquidation faster.

6. All the WGE members again expressed their very strong appreciation for the heavy workload of the EOC and for the major progress in all of the five components achieved over the past four months as well as over the course of the CEP since its start in 2006.

7. Viet Nam requested additional funds under their LoA, which EOC agreed to arrange for.

8. PRC emphasized the importance of institutional capacity building and their support to linking CEP activities with ASEAN activities. PRC also emphasized that all CEP components should be aligned to and supportive of the BCI flagship component and could even be reported accordingly. Furthermore, PRC expressed their appreciation of the Tourism SEA work in Cambodia and work in Guangxi province. PRC also mentioned that SEPA will assist in overcoming any difficulties experienced in the Xishuangbanna BCI pilot project.

9. On TAP's role PRC highlighted that it has three functions: provide advise on strategic issues to EOC; review CEP progress and provide recommendations for adjustment; and assist WGE member countries in indentifying environmental expertise and experiences to be shared within the GMS. PRC suggested that TAP join the proposed discussion workshop on EOC future. It was also suggested by PRC that EOC should strengthen the relationship with NSU and with the EPA function within the NSU. PRC also highlighted that there are different views on the role of the NSU. PRC requested clarification on GEF regional allocation on climate change. Regarding the future role of EOC it was emphasized by PRC that it should be discussed not in isolation but together with a discussion on the future of CEP, WGE, NSU, etc.

10. EOC appreciated the useful input from PRC and agreed to follow up on the suggestions. EOC informed the WGE that the brainstorming workshop on the future role of the EOC would first be with the WGE members and a subsequent workshop would be organized to include partners as well who may be invited to present their viewpoints to the WGE members. EOC also clarified that the GEF regional allocation fund are not part of the CEP.

11. Lao PDR requested that experiences in the Component 1 SEA projects in Cambodia and Viet Nam be shared with them. The need for support to environmental management capacity at central and local level was emphasized by Lao PDR. It was also requested by Lao PDR that BCI progress be included in WGE SAM2 reports. Regarding GIS work Lao PDR suggested that use and impact be more closely followed and evaluated and that GIS training be increased. It was also suggested that EOC professional staff be posted on short-term basis with the WGE member offices as "deputed" experts. EOC appreciated the useful input from Lao PDR and agreed to consider the suggestions.

12. Cambodia expressed its willingness to share Component 1 Tourism SEA project experiences. Regarding the Cambodian deputation, Mr. Chanrithy advised that if the EOC wished to extend the stay of the deputation from Cambodia, that a formal request be sent to him which was agreed. (This letter requesting an extension of deputation by two months has already been sent to Mr. Chanrithy) Cambodia also highlighted their limited capacity in the area of sustainable financing schemes and requested EOC to provide support on this issue. Cambodia also expressed the need for discussing the role of EOC. All items brought up by Cambodia were appreciated by EOC, which agrees to follow up on the suggestions.

13. Thailand emphasized linkages between CEP work and the Millennium Development Goals and similarly emphasized that the linkages between the CEP components must be strengthened. Thailand also proposed WGE study visits to the BCI pilot sites. Regarding the GIS work, Thailand asked about possibilities to use it for transboundary environmental issues such as haze at the Thai-Myanmar border. The ADB informed the WGE that the EOC GIS does not have real time data which is necessary to respond to issues such as haze at the border. He informed the WGE that ASEAN may be better equipped to handle this issue and that CEP may be able to provide some assistance at most. Thailand also requested EOC to be mindful of the long-term sustainability of current activities, beyond projects completion. Thailand furthermore, inquired into the possibilities of reallocation among countries of the CEP budget, to which ADB responded that the allocation is not done on a country basis but on a components basis.

14. Regarding the activities in Preah Vihear, Thailand expressed its willingness to work closely together with Cambodia. EOC appreciated the useful input from Thailand and agreed to consider the suggestions.

IV. REPORT ON THE 1st EMM TASK FORCE MEETING

15. Mrs. Keobang A. Keola, Lao PDR, reported on the 1st EMM Task Force meeting confirming that Lao PDR and ADB is co-hosting the EMM, which is scheduled for 28-30 January 2008 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The 2nd EMM Task Force meeting is scheduled for 10th December, 2007, in Bangkok, Thailand. Mrs. Keobang A Keola also gave an update on the latest development regarding the preparations for the meeting, including logistics and site visits.

16. PRC suggested that Ministers' statements come before screening of the CEP video. Lao PDR encouraged WGE members and EOC to send to her comments and suggestions for the EMM and the GMS Summit. PRC also emphasized that statements during the EMM need to focus on issues already generally agreed upon by the GMS countries, otherwise there is need for new endorsements by all GMS Environment Ministers.

V. NEW CONCEPTS

17. Prof. Dawood Ghaznavi reported on the new proposal *ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan 2008-2012: Implementation Workshop* and its eligibility according to EOC Business Procedures. The proposal has been submitted by MoNRE, Thailand, and meets the CEP/BCI eligibility and selection criteria. The requested budget would support two participants from each GMS country, one each from the Ministries of Environment and Education.

18. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam all supported the new proposal. PRC also in principle supported the new proposal but requested a

clarification of the status of China in this ASEAN workshop. EOC agreed to immediately clarify this question with the workshop organizers. The proponent country, Thailand, also agreed to confirm the title of the workshop so to clarify the role of China. Viet Nam requested participation of three persons from each GMS country. EOC will raise also this question with the workshop organizers. The proposed timing for the workshop is March 2008.

VI. OTHER EVENTS

19. Mr. Javed H Mir, provided an overview of the 3rd GMS Summit, scheduled to be held at the end of March, 2008, in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The proposed theme for the Summit is *Enhancing Competitiveness Through Greater Connectivity*. EMM input into GMS Summit statements and resolutions will be further discussed during the 2nd EMM Task Force meeting, scheduled for 10th December, 2007. EOC will send Input/suggestions for drafting the EMM Statement by the WGE during the week after this videoconference meeting.

20. The 2nd EMM Task Force meeting is scheduled for 10 December, 2007, in Bangkok, Thailand. Apart from abovementioned issues, EMM draft resolution will also be discussed during this meeting. PRC emphasized that the EMM input to the GMS Summit statement may have three key parts: 1) recognition of the progress of GMS environmental cooperation, 2) future environmental challenges in the GMS and, 3) direction of the GMS environmental cooperation. PRC also added that the GMS Summit declaration does not need prior endorsement by GMS Environment Ministers.

21. WGE has been invited to join the next meeting for the Working Group on Agriculture, WGA Coordinators' Meeting, scheduled for 11-12 December, 2007, in Bangkok, Thailand. The WGE/WGA joint session to be held on the 11th December will focus on biodiesel and climate change. Regarding climate change PRC added that adaptation is the key priority.

VII. DATE AND VENUE OF THE 14th WGE ANNUAL MEETING

22. Mr. Javed H Mir proposed that the next WGE Annual Meeting, WGE AM14, be held 20-22 May, 2008. The month of May is more suitable for this meeting since many key meetings are already scheduled for June, such as the GEF Council meeting. Following the country rotation, WGE AM14 will be held in Lao PDR.

VIII. CONCLUSION

23. Mr. Urooj Malik, Director, ADB, joined the final session of the meeting. He commended the strong leadership shown by the WGE members on regional environmental cooperation. He also expressed appreciation for the considerable achievements attained this far in the CEP/BCI and his gratitude for the hard work put in by EOC. Much appreciation was also expressed by Mr. Malik for the effort of development partners in supporting the CEP/BCI in spite of the many challenges. He also reiterated that there are some very important events coming up, such as the WGE/WGA joint meeting, the EMM and the GMS Summit.

24. The WGE members were asked to comment on the usefulness of the videoconference modality. Cambodia appreciated the fact that it reduces the time needed to set aside for the meeting, particularly during this busy period of the year, but also mentioned that the meeting style is not so interactive. Thailand suggested that a bigger screen be used so that participants can see each other better.

25. Mr. Javed H Mir extended his deep appreciation to the WGE members, and development and implementing partners for their participation and excellent contributions. He also extended his thanks to the EOC, both technical and support staff, for arranging the meeting.

26. With that, the meeting was called to a close.