



GMS Working Group on Environment 18th Annual Meeting

**Jinghong, Yunnan, People's Republic of China
17–18 May 2012**

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

1. The Eighteenth Meeting of the Working Group on Environment (WGE AM-18) was held in Jinghong, Yunnan, People's Republic of China (PR China). The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, PR China, with support from the Greater Mekong Subregion Environment Operations Center (EOC). The major objectives of the meeting were to (i) review progress made by the Core Environment Program and Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative (CEP-BCI), review the CEP-BCI work plan for 2012–2013, and (iii) explore GMS collaboration and initiatives in the thematic context of “Green Economy.”
2. The Meeting participants included delegations from Cambodia, PR China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Thailand. Also in attendance were Asian Development Bank (ADB) representatives; EOC staff; as well as development partner, civil society, and private sector representatives. WGE members from each country chaired sessions during the meeting.
3. Participants' list, presentations, the WGE resolution and other key documentation from the meeting is available on the EOC website: www.gms-eoc.org

Day One Proceedings: 17 May 2012

Session 1: Welcome and Agenda Setting

4. His Excellency Xu Qinghua, Director General of International Cooperation, Ministry of Environmental Protection, PR China, welcomed participants. He thanked the Asian Development Bank, Environment Operations Center, and development partners for their support to CEP-BCI. He noted the progress made in PR China through the program as well as the sustainable development challenges facing the GMS due to rapid economic growth.
5. Mr Javed Mir, the Director of ADB's Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture Division, provided opening remarks. He introduced the context of development in GMS, the pressures this had placed on the environment, the success of CEP-BCI and the challenges ahead for the program. Mr. Mir ended by requesting

guidance from the WGE on how ADB could further improve CEP-BCI to deliver on its mission.

6. His Excellency Yang Sha, Vice-Governor of Xishuangbanna Prefecture then welcomed participants, followed by an introduction to the meeting agenda by Mr. Mir and a group photo.

Session II: Keynote Presentations on Green Economy

7. Two keynote presentations on Green Economy were delivered during Session II. In the first keynote, Ms. Anna Stabrawa, United Nation's Environment Programme (UNEP), focused on the findings of UNEP's flagship report "Towards a Green Economy." She explained what green economy is and the approach and focus it requires. Ms. Stabrawa then highlighted the report's key messages, namely that a green economy will stimulate growth over time above that gained by business-as-usual and while reducing ecological scarcities and environmental risks. Ms. Stabrawa also noted the public policies needed to enable a green economy and gave examples of 'green shoots' in the GMS. She finished by presenting potential areas of work synergy between UNEP and CEP-BCI.

8. In the second keynote, Dr. Zhou Guomei, China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center, presented on PR China's green economy initiatives and shared thoughts on how the GMS could further its efforts towards a green economy. Dr. Guomei noted that green economy is not new to PR China, but the issue is how to accelerate and deepen its green transformation and further improve cost effectiveness and governance efficiency. She also said that this transformation should not only be about dealing with crises, but also about looking for green growth opportunities. After providing examples of PR China's green economy related policies and plans, she focused on how the country had embarked on low carbon industrialization. Dr. Zhou ended with some points about GMS green economy, specifically that there is no "one-size fits all" green economy model, but that a differentiated, coordinated, and regionalized approach is needed.

Session III: Progress Reporting on CEP-BCI (2006-2011)

9. Mr. Choun Chanrithy, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia, presented on the achievements made during Phase I of CEP-BCI. After giving specific examples, he concluded that CEP-BCI had successfully embedded the environmental dimension in the GMS Economic Cooperation Program, and that the foundation was in place to scale up influence for Phase II.

10. In the discussion that followed, there was recognition that CEP-BCI had made many worthy achievements. Sida queried on the challenges faced by the program, Among the issues identified by WGE representatives were:

- overlaps between development agencies;
- multiple rather than complementary reporting (ie EPAs and SoEs);
- challenge of passing key messages from reports and assessments to decision makers;
- lack of inter-ministerial coordination;
- capacities often still weak, particularly for provincial and local government; and institutionally in Myanmar; and
- information management – a clearing house needed.

Session IV: CEP-BCI Phase II Inception and Country Work Plans

11. Mr. Sanath Ranawana, ADB Senior Natural Resource Management Specialist, presented CEP-BCI's consolidated work plan for 2012–2013. The work plan activities were grouped by components, and contained information on their geographic scope as well as an indicative timeline for implementation. Following this, the six GMS countries each presented their country work plans.

12. During the ensuing discussion, WGE representatives from the other five countries offered their encouragement and support for the increased role of Myanmar in CEP-BCI Phase II. Viet Nam noted the need for more bilateral discussions as occurred earlier on in Phase I, and both Viet Nam and Cambodia requested ADB support for WGE representatives to attend the upcoming Convention on Biological Biodiversity Conference of Parties (CBD COP) meeting in India. Both Cambodia and UNEP pointed out the need to be well aware of other development partner's activities to avoid duplication and foster collaboration.

13. In response to the comments, Mr. Ranawana described the country offer of support to increasing the engagement of Myanmar in the program as "heartening" and "shows the spirit of collaboration in the GMS." Regarding duplication, he pointed out that the country-level consultations had involved civil society and other partners to identify overlap and look for potential synergies. On global events such as the COP, Mr. Ranawana said while they are important and the ADB would do its best to accommodate such requests, there is limited budget and to make more meaningful, attendees should perhaps hold a side event.

Session V: CEP-BCI Phase II Work Plan Review and Implementation Planning

14. Ms. Cynthia Razon, ADB, presented on ADB's procedures as administrative body for the program. Her presentation overviewed procurement, disbursements, consultant recruitment, and project review.

15. Mr. Sompongse Somsookh, EOC, then presented on how the EOC implements the aforementioned ADB guidelines. He focused on National Support Unit staff recruitment, management of Letters of Agreement, and Implementation Framework Procedures.

16. During the discussion that followed, Lao PDR pointed out more needs to be done in regard to engaging national consultants as there is confusion sometimes from both sides. One issue identified was the inability of the WGE to concur national consultants work as often there were no clear outputs stipulated. In response, Mr. Ranawana agreed that verifying consultant outputs was a challenge, particularly when some roles are not directly output focused or when monthly time-sheets do not reveal the full story. He suggested that Terms of Reference need to be more specific in including tangible, and monthly, outputs, as well as the need for performance evaluations. Viet Nam thanked the EOC for their timely liquidation processing and appreciated the effort that goes into this.

17. Finland and Sweden representatives, Mr. Antti Inkinen and Ms. Ulrika Akesson, delivered a development partner joint statement. After highlighting the challenges facing the GMS governments in managing rapid growth, and CEP-BCI's unique positioning to help achieve this, they offered advice for the program for Phase II. The advice was centred on seven topics: sustainable impact, government ownership, partnerships, communication, results-orientation, transparency, and joint monitoring.

18. To end the statement and stimulate discussion, leading questions were presented for the WGE members. Questions and subsequent discussion focused on: inter-sector cooperation at country and regional levels, support given by CEP-BCI to national policy engagement and whether more actors need to be involved, impacts of CEP-BCI Phase I and improvements needed, and private sector engagement.

19. There was consensus that the private sector needs to be engaged more, but that achieving this was a challenge. Lao PDR and Viet Nam pointed out the importance of the private sector in green economy initiatives. Cambodia highlighted the difficulties of dealing with concessionaires and the importance of engaging with them through CEP-BCI. Thailand noted there were many examples of private sector engagement in their country, through schemes such as the King's Initiative. Myanmar highlighted the need to raise the awareness of private sector engagement on ecosystem values.

20. Most countries agreed that there were significant challenges remaining in cross-sectorial collaboration. Cambodia noted that environment sector agencies were not empowered and that building capacity in other sectors is important. PR China highlighted that inter-sectorial cooperation between provinces and prefectures had improved in their country and mutual learning was leading to better decision making. Thailand said that the BCI initiative had provided many opportunities for collaboration between sectors. Viet Nam noted out that Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes had generated much cross-sectorial collaboration.

21. On impacts, PR China noted that local implementation is providing valuable experience and much is being learnt from the other GMS countries, resulting in feedback which is helping sound decision making. Also, that BCI experience has influenced beyond pilot areas and into Strategic Action Plans for biodiversity. PR China added that the program had helped strengthen cooperation and understanding between government and research institutions. Thailand added that CEP-BCI had helped the country recognize the importance of biodiversity corridors and the country was committing 12 million baht to undertake a feasibility study for nationwide corridors.

Day Two Proceedings: 18 May 2012

22. Mr. Lothar Linde, EOC, presented on the new program website. He emphasized that the new site was a good step towards the program realizing its aim of being a knowledge hub for environmental management. He introduced three interactive tools on the site: Development Map, Interactive Atlas and the Indicator Portal.

23. During the brief discussion that followed, the EOC was congratulated for their work on this. Comments and questions centred on whether there were plans for national-level websites and the importance of making information and data easily accessible.

Session VI: GMS Regional Cooperation: Towards a Green Economy

24. The session begun with four presentations on various aspects of green economy in the GMS, and was followed by a moderated panel discussion.

25. In the first presentation, Ms Rhodora Concepcion, GMS Secretariat, ADB, introduced the broader GMS Economic Cooperation Program. She focused on its

achievements so far, the new 2012–2022 strategic framework, the emphasis on sustainable development, and entry points for green economy initiatives.

26. Ms. Yan Peng, Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia), presented on increasing resource efficiency through green freight. She highlighted that global freight consumes 35% of world transport energy use and its continued rapid growth. Ms. Peng introduced the China Green Freight Initiative and the process it had followed from concept development through to scaling up. She ended by noting the importance of green freight to achieve a green economy.

27. Mr. Suppakorn Chinvanno, SEA-START, presented on improving the climate resilience of agrarian communities. He noted the need to understand risks holistically and to mainstream climate change responses into community development strategies and plans. Drawing on a case study from Thailand, Mr. Suppakorn noted that there are no universal answers as climate responses need to be local context specific. Innovation, creative ideas, better knowledge management, and social dialogue were among the key ingredients for adaptation work at the local level. His overall message was that climate change needs to be integrated into development strategies and treated as a cross-cutting issue rather than as standalone issue with separate strategies and plans.

28. Mr. Avijit Gautam, Emergent Ventures International, presented on the role of the private sector in progressing towards a green economy. Mr. Gautam highlighted that the private sector is increasingly aware of green economy and see it as a resource efficient, technology driven activity that increases growth while reducing carbon footprints. The focus so far, he noted, was on mitigation rather than adaptation in terms of long-term business models. Motivation for the private sector to engage in green economy centred on avoiding costs and mitigating liabilities, building company resilience in operations and value chains, expanding market share, developing and deploying new products and services, accessing new finance streams, and building corporate reputation.

29. Policy steps to engage the private sector included increasing their awareness of green economy and their potential role, green market opportunities, and regulations; providing them with tools, and enhancing their capacity to act as brokers between social development and green economy. Mr Gautum's presentation ended with examples of incentives to promote green economy including both institutional and economic.

30. In the moderated panel discussion, one of the main points made was on whether there was adequate knowledge on climate change adaptation and if so, was it being shared effectively. Khun Suppakorn pointed out there were significant information gaps and often data was not being turned into relevant information and eventually knowledge. He also noted that the information that does exist is often hard to access.

31. Further discussions were on: fragmentation in the freight sector, the merits of restrictive versus supportive policy measures, how to ensure policy makers are reached with information, the limitations of having non-powerful ministerial departments responsible for climate change, and collaboration between various ADB entities.

32. To end the session, a skeleton structure of a GMS Green Economy presentation for Rio+20 was shown to the WGE. Countries were asked whether they endorsed the structure and whether they thought it was a good idea for such a

presentation. While all countries agreed that the structure and idea of the presentation was appropriate, WGE representatives were unable to commit to actually presenting it at Rio as most were not attending and it was likely that country delegates attending would have too many other commitments. One suggestion was that a video presentation could be produced and another that an ADB representative deliver the presentation on behalf of the WGE.

Session VI: WGE Closed Door Session

No minutes.

Session VII: Closing Session

33. PR China reported on the closed session and read out the WGE resolution, which endorsed the CEP-BCI 2012–2013 work plan with a few amendments and directed the EOC to begin its implementation forthwith.

34. Dates for the next WGE meeting (7th Semi-Annual Meeting) were discussed and provisionally set for 25–26 October 2012. The meeting will be held in PR China though a decision on the venue will be made closer to the time.

35. Both the ADB and PR China made closing remarks, thanking participants for their productive and positive work during the meeting. Mr Ranawana, ADB, commented on the strong level of maturity in the program in terms of planning and cohesiveness, and pointed out that both the work plan consultation process and this WGE meeting had clearly shown the strong commitment and ownership of the GMS countries. He ended by thanking PR China's Ministry of Environmental Protection for hosting the event.

With that, the meeting closed.

ENDS.