

GMS WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT 23rd ANNUAL MEETING
Workshop on Green Growth in the GMS: Best Practices
Siem Reap, Cambodia
11 July 2017

Welcome Remarks
by
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Ministry of Environment, Cambodia

Salutations
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of H.E Say Samal, Minister of Environment and Chair of the National Council of Sustainable Development, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to Siem Reap for the second in a series of technical workshops on green growth in the GMS that are being organized in preparation for the 5th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting that is to be held early next year in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I take this opportunity to thank the Asian Development Bank and all development partners for their continued support to Cambodia's sustainable development efforts.

This workshop comes at the right time when Cambodia is about to roll out our National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan (2016-2023), recently formulated with support of the GMS Core Environment Program, and which aims to promote sound environmental management and sustainable use of our natural capital. We are therefore very pleased to host this important event that will focus on best practices on environmental management. It will provide vital inputs to the 23rd Annual Meeting of the GMS Working Group on Environment and the ongoing preparations for the next phase of the Core Environment Program.

The urgency of pursuing a green growth path, particularly for the GMS, rings more loudly today than ever before, as the sustainability of our natural resource base, which has been the main driver of the region's rapid economic growth over the past two decades, is seriously threatened by inefficient resource use, population growth and rapid urbanization, pollution, climate change and disaster risks, among others. Future growth trends are expected to continue, putting enormous pressure on an already shrinking natural resource base and degraded environment, affecting particularly the poor and the vulnerable population.

Green growth puts to center stage environmental sustainability as a necessary condition and a core component of the strategic agenda of economic development and poverty reduction. The transition towards a green economy calls for the valuation of natural resources so that their benefits and the costs of environmental degradation and a shrinking resource base are properly accounted for. It entails the integration and streamlining of environmental considerations into key sectors of the economy so that coherent policies and actions can be put in place towards efficient natural resource use. Realizing a green economy also means scaling up on the dissemination and implementation of best practices, research and investments, and going beyond our comfort zone by exploring innovative strategies and instruments, engaging with the private sector, are some examples.

Since 2015, following the midterm review of the Core Environment Program's Phase II, we have been engaged in supporting the development of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan, which the WGE has tasked the Environment Operations Center to carry out. This workshop provides us the opportunity, as a united WGE, to finalize our vision and plans in operationalizing our green growth path moving forward with the next phase of the program. The endorsement of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan is our key deliverable in the upcoming 5th GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting.

Your Excellency's, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Cambodian Government is accelerating efforts to promote green growth as a new source of growth in recent years. For example, Cambodia released its National Policy for Green Growth and National Strategic Plan for Green Growth 2013-2030, in March 2013. In the same year, the government also launched the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014-2023. In addition, Cambodia's National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 identified the need for environmental issues to "assume centrality" and committed Cambodia to an economy based on green growth principles.

Cambodia has made significant progress in rapidly expanding access to the electricity grid. This progress was driven by strong targets and a government backed investment program. For example, Cambodia has a target to provide electricity access to 100% of villages by 2020. Under this target, Cambodia has a target of providing grid connection to 70% of households by 2030.

Cambodia's National Green Growth Policy recognizes the central role that the private sector plays in achieving green growth, and the importance of creating an enabling environment to promote investment in sustainable urbanization, sustainable ecosystems, and especially in sustainable energy. The Royal Government is also working on an ecotourism policy to promote sustainable tourism and to boost future economic growth, address the livelihoods of local communities, and management of natural capital.

In addition, Cambodia is implementing the Green Urban Development Program aiming to support the implementation of urban green growth in Cambodia through the following program deliverables:

1. Design of a methodology for green city strategic planning in Cambodia
2. Piloting the methodology through designing a green city strategic plan for Phnom Penh
3. Identifying and prioritizing green city investment projects for Phnom Penh
4. Designing an investment action plan to mobilize resources for the implementation of a priority green city project.

Therefore, in this workshop, let us strengthen our partnership to intensify our green growth efforts by exploring opportunities and innovative ideas to create and strengthen the environment and instruments to nurture a green economy in the GMS. I look forward to fruitful discussions, particularly in terms of the future direction of our regional collaboration on the environment through the Core Environment Program.

I would like to conclude my remarks by posing a few questions for our discussion as follows:

1. What is the vital role of green growth for the future of developing countries?
2. How green growth can address issues of poverty and social equity?
3. How do developing countries get development partners' support to pursue green growth?

Once again, I would like to thank you all for joining this workshop and my special thanks go to the organizing team for working so hard to make today's event happen. I and my colleagues from the Ministry of Environment and National Council for Sustainable Development are pleased to share our experiences with you and exchange ideas of best practices during and after this workshop.

Thank you!