

Address at the 3rd GMS EMM

Mr. XU Qinghua, Special Representative of Minister

Ministry of Environmental Protection of China

July 28, 2011, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Your Excellency Minister Mok Mareth, Vice President Mr. Bindu Lohani,
Distinguished Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning!

I am honored to be here at the beautiful city of Phnom Penh and attend the 3rd GMS Environment Ministers Meeting as the special representative of Minister, Ministry of Environmental Protection of China. On behalf of the Chinese delegation, I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the Ministry of Environment of Cambodia and the Asian Development Bank for the thoughtful arrangement.

The six countries in the GMS are connected by mountains and rivers, it has always been the main theme for GMS dialogue and cooperation to push forward economic, social and environmental integration and promote sustainable development. The Chinese government attaches great importance to cooperating with other GMS countries and we deem good domestic environmental performance as the basis for better sub-regional cooperation. I am glad to say that Yunnan and Guangxi provinces, which are the main players in China participating in GMS cooperative activities, have witnessed overall stable environmental quality and improved environmental management capacity. By 2010, in Yunnan province alone, there are 162 nature reserves, including 16 national reserves, covering a total area of 2.96 million hectares. In Guangxi autonomous region, there are also 78 nature reserves of different kinds with a total area of 1.45 million hectares. The forest coverage of the two provinces reached 47.5% and 58% respectively.

The same with the other GMS countries, China is a developing country faced with challenges in handling environment and development issues. Over the past years, the Chinese government has been exploring a new path for environmental protection to alleviate the pressure of rapid economic growth on resources and the environment. We have made major adjustments in our environmental policy, put forward strategic concepts like ecological civilization, historical transformation of environmental work, and recuperation for rivers and lakes, stressed that environmental protection is an essential livelihood issue, set mandatory targets for pollution reduction for the next five years, and prioritized prominent environmental problems that hamper sustainable development and harm public health. By 2010, China had reduced total SO₂ emission and COD discharge by 14.29% and 12.45% respectively on the basis of 2005, exceeding the set mandatory targets of 10% cut for both pollutants. Such cut in pollution emission were reflected in evident improvement of environmental quality. However, in the next few years, China's development will remain imbalanced and the pressure on resources and the environment will continue to grow. It'll be a long way to go before China truly realizes a balance between environmental protection and economic and social development.

This year is the starting year of China's 12th Five-Year-Plan period, which is from 2011 to 2015. According to the 12th Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, the main guidelines for environmental work in China in the next five years will be: implement the scientific outlook on development, help change economic development pattern, raise the level of ecological civilization, integrate pollution reduction, environmental quality improvement, risk prevention with balanced urban and rural development, prioritize prominent environmental problems that hamper sustainable development and harm public health, and explore a new path for environmental protection that features low cost, high returns, low emission and sustainability. By 2015, there will be some mandatory targets to be met: energy consumption per unit of GDP and CO₂ emission shall decrease by 16% and 17%

respectively, total SO₂ and COD emission shall be cut by 8%, and Ammonia Nitrogen and NO_x cut by 10% on the basis of 2010. The environmental quality shall be improved evidently.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Strengthening sub-regional environmental cooperation is an important premise for protecting the nature and promoting sustainable development in the GMS. China always believes that varied economic realities as well as historical and cultural traditions shall be taken into consideration in GMS cooperation. We shall have closer dialogue, seek common interests while putting aside differences, strengthen cooperation, be mutually supportive and realize win-win results. As a long-time supporter for GMS cooperation, China will continue to be an active player in promoting environmental cooperation in the sub-region. I would like to make a few suggestions on our future cooperation:

First, Take into account of the features of the sub-region and strengthen dialogue on environment and development. GMS environmental cooperation is an important part of East Asia collaboration and will also contribute to the Rio+20 Summit next year. We should promote regional dialogue on environment and development and ensure that environmental collaboration becomes a positive platform for advancing inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Second, Better protect sub-regional biodiversity and promote its sustainable use and management. The GMS countries have made long-term and effective efforts to promote sustainable development in the sub-region. During the past five years, the Working Group on Environment (WGE) accomplished a lot in the first Phase of our CEP-BCI program, in particular, the great success of the BCI component was recognized by all. Biodiversity is not only a hot issue of global significance and a core regional environmental asset, but also a fundamental basis for sustained

economic growth in the GMS. With what we already achieved in BCI during Phase I, we should take further action to promote sustainable use and management of biodiversity, making room for wider development possibilities.

Third, Strengthen capacity building on sub-regional environmental management. The GMS countries are all developing countries and it's a common priority to improve our environmental management capacity. We hope that we could further strengthen capacity building on various issues, such as environmental policy, environmental enforcement and environmental monitoring. Improved capacity will serve as a solid foundation for deeper cooperation in the future. In this connection, I am glad to announce that the Chinese government plans to provide portable water and air monitoring equipments to GMS countries Besides, we will also organize policy and technical training programs on urban solid waste management for GMS countries. We hope to do what we can to help improve regional environmental management capacity.

Fourth, Keep a close eye on global and regional environmental issue. Diversity and pragmatism is the key to successful cooperative programs, and the advancement of global and regional cooperation can bring about many opportunities. Therefore it'll be beneficial to strengthen coordination and capacity building on issues like climate change, persistent organic pollutants (POPs), illegal trans-boundary movement of hazardous wastes, water environmental management, etc.

Under the principles of equality and mutual respect, consensus building in decision-making, pragmatism, and an outward-looking results orientation, the Chinese government will continue to joint hands with the other GMS countries, strengthen our dialogue and exchanges, and make concerted efforts towards sustainable development of the sub-region.

Thank you.