



Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program
GMS Agriculture Ministers' Meeting
10 April 2007, Beijing, People's Republic of China

JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Preamble

1. We, the Agriculture Ministers and Vice Ministers from the six GMS countries, namely, the Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Union of Myanmar, Kingdom of Thailand, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, assembled for the first time in Beijing, PRC, between 9-11 April 2007 in response to the call of the Second GMS Summit held in Kunming, PRC in July 2005 for the early convening of a meeting of the GMS Agriculture Ministers. We are pleased to be joined in our discussions by the official from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and representatives from other development partners. The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Hua Jianmin, State Councilor and co-chaired by Mr. Sun Zhengcai, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, PRC and Mr. C. Lawrence Greenwood, Jr. Vice President, ADB.

2. The agriculture sector is one of the priority sectors under the GMS Economic Cooperation Program as it is seen to play a vital role in addressing rural poverty in the GMS countries. We note the affirmation by the Second GMS Summit that agricultural development is essential to poverty reduction because poverty is largely a rural phenomenon across the GMS and millions living in rural areas depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Achievements

3. We fully support the work of the GMS Working Group on Agriculture (WGA) since its establishment in 2002 and are pleased with the progress of WGA's work program with support from ADB and other development partners through regional technical assistance to address priority concerns. We also appreciate the financial support provided by ADB in promoting partnerships among GMS countries and organizing dialogues among senior government officials and development partners, training workshops, and seminars on special topics to accelerate agricultural development and reduce poverty in the subregion.

Emerging Issues and Challenges

4. While substantial achievements have been made, much more remains to be done. Emerging issues and concerns include the alarming threat of transboundary animal diseases like avian flu and plant pests, biosecurity, and food safety; the need to develop human resources and share information across the sector and to access new and emerging technologies; the need for sustainable use of natural resources; and increasing demand for alternative sources of energy, such as biofuel from crops and biomass. There is also the need to address institutional and program-related issues to improve program complementation and ensure synergy.

5. Our countries will have to deal with the challenges of increasing and sustaining productivity in traditional commodities, and transforming family farms into competitive agribusinesses through technological and institutional innovations to participate in production

and export of high-value products, non-traditional crops, and value-added commodities. Furthermore, the landless poor, smallholder farmers and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) should be strongly assisted to participate in the subregional value-chains on selected priority crops for food and biofuel.

Our Commitment to Accelerate Subregional Cooperation in Agriculture

6. In line with the GMS Leaders' pledge at the Second GMS Summit to accelerate subregional cooperation in agriculture, today we have formally endorsed the Strategic Framework for GMS Cooperation in Agriculture and Core Agriculture Support Program (CASP) for 2006-2010. We call on the WGA to mobilize the required financial, intellectual, and human resources and to further expand mutually beneficial partnerships with development partners, international agricultural research and academic institutions, the private sector, and civil society.

7. Today, we have also launched the website for the GMS Agriculture Information Network Service (AINS), which is aimed at providing and exchanging information, facilitating economic and trade activities in agriculture, and expanding and deepening cooperation in the sector. We express our sincere appreciation to the PRC Government and ADB for providing technical and financial support for the initiation of the project and we commit to the effective implementation of AINS.

Strengthening Partnerships for Agricultural Development in the GMS

8. We call on the continued support of ADB and other development partners including governments, other multilateral financial institutions, intergovernmental organizations, international academic and research agencies, the private sector, and civil society to provide full support for the implementation of the priority projects under the CASP.

9. We look forward to further strengthening our partnerships with all relevant entities to ensure the continued development of the agriculture sector in the GMS.

10. The delegates from GMS countries and development partners express our deep appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality accorded to us during our stay in Beijing, and to ADB for its support and assistance for the meeting.

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