

Opening Statement

H.E. Cheang Am
Provincial Governor
Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia

at the
Second Meeting of the GMS Economic Corridors Forum (ECF-2)
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
16 September 2009

H.E. Sok Chenda Sophea; Arjun Thapan, Director General,
Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank; Fellow
Governors and Senior Local Officials; Distinguished Guests; Ladies
and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Province of Svay Rieng and the governors of other
Cambodian provinces, I am very pleased and honored to address this very
first meeting of the GMS Governors' Forum.

We, local officials, consider this occasion and the establishment of the
Governors' Forum as a very important milestone in the emergence of the
GMS as a dynamic region and a showcase of cooperation in this part of the
world. We are aware that cooperation among our countries has been going
on for quite some time now, but up until now these efforts have mostly
been taking place at the national level. This is the first that we who are
closest to the communities that are intended to be the ultimate beneficiaries
of this important process are being closely involved.

We are also the ones who are most familiar with the conditions in these communities, with the various problems and barriers to economic and social development that hinder progress, particularly in the border areas, as well as with the many opportunities that are also present in them. We may also be in a good position to provide some useful suggestions on how to address the problems and how to tap the opportunities.

We also wish to express our full support to the current and future efforts to develop the economic corridors in the region. We are particularly pleased to note that the GMS countries are now endeavoring to accelerate the transformation of transport corridors into fully functioning economic corridors, with dynamic trade, investment, production, and other economic activities taking place along them.

We in Svay Rieng Province are already feeling the beneficial impact of all these efforts. Providing the clearest demonstration of such benefits is the ADB-funded cross-border power transmission line that runs along our province and that enables transfer of power from Viet Nam to Cambodia. This project not only provides secure and low cost power supply from a neighboring GMS country, but it also has a bulk supply distribution component which provides modern, cheap and reliable electricity supply to the poor rural communities along the transmission line's route. We are happy to report that whereas in 2004, only about 6% of our province's half a million people had access to electricity, by mid-2006, the distribution line already powers 16% of the province's households, at a cost that is about 20% cheaper than before. This enables people to get more work done for their businesses and farms, provides them with good lighting for their

children's studies, and powers their appliances for entertainment as well as for performing household chores more efficiently.

Moreover, the first subregional road, the Phnom Penh-Ho Chi Minh City Highway, passes through our province and one of the busiest borders with our neighbor Viet Nam is along this major artery. Our province has benefited much from the increased trade that this cross border link has made possible.

We therefore strongly believe that developing economic corridors is critical to accelerating the economic development of the GMS region. The increased interconnectedness in priority GMS economic corridors – through more developed transport routes, power transmission systems, and telecommunications networks as well as trade and transport agreements – will lead to markedly increased cross-border economic exchange, substantial employment creation, and improved living conditions, particularly in the border areas.

We commit to participate actively in this important process and we wish the Governors' Forum every success.

Thank you.