

**Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)
Experts Meeting on Development of Institutional Mechanisms
for Environmental Management and Sustainable Development in the GMS
18-19 August 2003
Manila, Philippines**

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

1. The Experts Meeting on Development of Institutional Mechanisms for Environmental Management and Sustainable Development in the GMS was held in Manila, Philippines from 18-19 August 2003. Attached is the [agenda and program of the meeting](#) (Appendix 1).
2. The meeting was held to support the implementation of the Johannesburg Declaration and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), which Heads of States committed to during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002. A priority was to provide capacity building to Governments in formulating/ implementing their National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDS). The objectives of the meeting were presented for clarification in Working Session I.
3. The participants of the meeting included delegations from the Kingdom of Cambodia, People's Republic of China (PRC), Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Union of Myanmar, Kingdom of Thailand, and Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Experts/ resource persons from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)- Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), UNEP-Regional Resource Center (RRC), United Nations Center for Regional Development (UNCRD), Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), Administrative Center for China Agenda 21, Ateneo de Manila University Center for Economic Research and Development (CERD), Asia-Pacific Earth Council, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)- GMS Academic and Research Network (GMSARN), Mekong River Commission (MRC), International Conservation Union (IUCN), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Thailand Environment Institute (TEI). [The list of participants](#) is attached as Appendix 2.
4. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Rajat Nag, Director General of the Mekong Department (MKRD).

Opening Session

5. Mr. Rajat Nag, Director General, Mekong Department, ADB, warmly welcomed the participants and noted the strong participation of environment focal persons and experts in the meeting. He cited the biodiversity and rich natural and cultural environment of the GMS, which is being threatened by common problems such as deforestation and increasing pollution. He said that environmental degradation in the subregion seriously threatened the living conditions of the poor who are dependent on natural resources for their livelihood. He noted that the GMS countries have reaffirmed their commitment to Agenda 21 during the 2002 Johannesburg Earth Summit, and that they were gearing up to translate the JPOI into action as well. He enumerated the challenges that GMS countries faced in implementing Agenda 21 and JPOI, and stressed the opportunities for subregional cooperation that could complement national efforts in addressing sustainable development issues. He appreciated the strong partnership that was

developed with UNEP and looked forward to cementing partnerships with other international organizations. He reiterated his desire for the meeting to produce valuable insights on how subregional efforts could produce synergies with national efforts at realizing Agenda 21 and JPOI. He closed by reiterating that poverty reduction remains the ultimate goal in pursuit of sustainable development in the GMS, and that their presence demonstrates their readiness to tackle this challenge.

6. Mr. Liqun Jin, VP, Operations Group 1, ADB, thanked the participants for coming to the Experts Meeting. He noted that the Millennium Declaration has reiterated support for the principles of sustainable development and environmental protection, which was confirmed in the 2002 Earth Summit in Johannesburg. He cited the Experts Meeting as a follow up on efforts made over the years and provides a good opportunity to translate into action the commitment in the JPOI. He said ADB looked forward to working in partnership with its DMCs in advancing their sustainable development agendas. He then noted ADB's vision of an Asian Pacific region free of poverty, and explained that ADB adopted various policies to help achieve its vision of sustainable development, namely, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Environment Policy, and Water Policy. ADB adopted a participatory approach in formulating these policies, as well as in the design and implementation of development projects. Facing common development challenges, he noted that the GMS countries have cooperated extensively under the GMS Program, especially through the adoption of the new GMS Strategic Framework to guide cooperation in the next decade. Moreover, the First GMS Summit of Leaders held in November 2002 in Phnom Penh called for better protection of the environment. The countries' Johannesburg commitments will require the further deepening of institutions and processes for environmental action. This includes enhancing cooperation through further development of environmental information and performance assessment systems, which are logical next steps for SEF. He concluded by stating that ADB would work closely with the GMS countries in advancing their Johannesburg commitments and wished the meeting every success.

7. Mr. Jan P. Van Heeswijk, Director General, Regional and Sustainable Development (RSDD) Division, ADB, noted that previous speakers set the stage well for deliberations and added his perspective on the issue of sustainable development. He noted that the Asian Environmental Outlook (AEO) 2001 concluded that environmental degradation in the Asia Pacific region was above all else a failure of policy and institutions. He said the message here is clear, sustainable development requires the creation of an enabling environment and institutional reform to strengthen central planning, sectoral development and environmental agencies. He then enumerated the AEO recommendations for a better enabling environment for sustainable development, and noted that policy changes in these areas need to go hand in hand with plans for changes in the institutions to tackle the sustainable development agenda. He cited the ADB's Environment Policy, which directs ADB to assist its DMCs to mainstream environmental considerations in its overall development plans. As such, ADB supports the new initiatives by GMS countries to develop their NSDSs. He cited various moves to strengthen the institutional frameworks all over the world from which lessons can be learned, and noted the three common elements of success: strong political commitment, multi-stakeholder forums, and mechanisms for mobilizing sustainable development activities. He closed his statement by reminding participants that they provide the impetus to establishment of sound and effective institutional mechanism and make it happen at the subregional level.

8. The meeting proceeded with the group photo, which was followed by the coffee break.

Working Session I: Current Challenges in Environmental Management and Sustainable Development

9. Mr. Nag requested participants to briefly state the name, title and organization, and at least one expectation for the experts meeting. Following individual self-introductions and [declaration of expectations](#) (summary attached as Appendix 3), Ms. Cindy Malvicini, the meeting facilitator, summarized the expectations, the most notable of which are as follows:

- a. need to tackle poverty reduction;
- b. need to prioritize activities;
- c. need to answer the “how” in defining the institutional mechanisms for sustainable development.

10. Ms. Malvicini introduced the agenda for the meeting, and indicated how these expectations would be addressed. The following objectives of the meeting were presented:

- a. to share experiences and challenges related to formulating and implementing NSDSs;
- b. to develop a common vision for institutional capacity in the GMS to implement Agenda 21 and the JPOI;
- c. to identify capacity-building measures needed to realize that vision at both the regional and national levels.

11. Ms. Malvicini also presented the following expected outcome and next steps:

Vision Statements and proposed actions to reach the visions will be generated and discussed at the next WGE meeting.

The agenda was reviewed and the participants provided comments and asked to be clarified on the objectives and agenda of the meeting. Mr. Kazu Onogawa (UNCRD) suggested that the highlights of the expectations be provided to the various breakout groups for their reference.

12. **Breakout Groups:** Ms. Malvicini assigned the participants into small groups to brainstorm on the following:

Participant Challenges Toward Implementing Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in the GMS

After the participants brainstormed an initial list, they identified for each the underlying causes / factors/ reasons for these challenges. The list was narrowed down to 6-7 challenges for each group, with their corresponding reasons, for presentation during the plenary session.

13. **Plenary: Group Reports.** The list of challenges and corresponding reasons of each group were written on white boards or in newsprint which were hung on white boards at the front of the room. The session was chaired by Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Director, UNEP-ROAP. For each group presentation, one member reported, other group members added and participants from the various groups were invited to comment. Appendix 4 presents the [detailed findings of each group](#) as reported. Afterward, the Chair provided a summary of the presentations.

14. **Plenary Presentations:** This session was chaired by Mr. Van Heeswijk. Prof. Cielito Habito of Ateneo-CERD presented his discussion paper entitled “Towards a Collective Pursuit

of Sustainable Development in the GMS: Progress, Problems, Prospects and Proposals". Prepared as reference material for the meeting, and earlier distributed to the participants, the paper covered the following topics: review of the progress of implementation of Agenda 21 in GMS countries; identification of key problems/ barriers in implementing JPOI, especially NSDS; recommending an efficient institutional framework to facilitate formulation and implementation of NSDS; and recommending a work plan (2003-2005) for institutional development and formulation/ implementation of NSDS in the GMS.

15. In his presentation, Mr. Habito explained the need for a unified approach to SD in the GMS, and showed the interdependence among the GMS countries. He explained the guiding framework based on Agenda 21, WSSD's JPOI, and the GMS Summit, and showed where the GMS countries are currently. He showed the current institutional set-up and the institutional programs in the GMS, where the GMS Program was shown as the larger framework that includes the four MRC members plus China and Myanmar. He presented the 2003 goal, and how the GMS countries could reach these. He explained the steps involved in NSDS/ GMS sustainable development strategy (SDS) formulation, and in setting up the national institutional mechanism. He then presented the recommended institutional set up and tackled the practical questions that needed to be addressed, such as which organizations should represent civil society and business in the multi-stakeholder processes. He concluded with the note that SD can only come about through genuine commitment, teamwork and partnership among stakeholders concerned.

16. Mr. Surendra Shresta (UNEP) presented the UNEP Program for JPOI and its relationship to the discussion paper. He gave a background on UNEP and its challenges in addressing poverty and the critical state of land, air, water and biodiversity. He presented UNEP's strategy, which comprise: facilitating implementation of global/ subregional/ national priorities; establishing a Knowledge Center in environment for SD; and initiating projects on emerging issues. He said UNEP targets two countries per subregion for capacity building in partnership with ADB, the UN, and various bilaterals. He added that work on subregional priority issues consist of assisting inter-governmental bodies to prioritize transboundary issues/ concerns. The Knowledge Center, he noted, creates and generates value from knowledge assets with partners. Emerging issues include current initiatives (Atmospheric Brown Cloud, Dust and Sand Storms) and new emerging issues (Afghanistan, e-waste, freshwater). He presented examples of SD indicators such as Human Development Index (HDI), Gross National Income per capita, Forest Area, etc. He expounded on the ADB-UNEP partnership in various TA projects (SEMIS I and II, SEF) and possible SD programmes in the GMS.

17. **Plenary Discussion: Identification of Points of Convergence/ Divergence with Participant Experience.** Mr. Van Heeswijk noted the previous presentations pointed out the need for strong stakeholder participation but asked the participants about their thinking on the extent to which participation should be pursued. The following were the responses from participants on stakeholder participation and other issues:

- a. Dr. Monthip (Thailand) asked about success models in the Philippines on multi-stakeholder participation. Mr. Habito replied that the trust barrier was the biggest one to overcome. He said it was important to take this first step and follow this up with a formal mechanism for more open partnership between government, private sector and civil society.
- b. Dr. Pachauri suggested that NSDSs should factor in priority areas identified by the 2002 WSSD, i.e., water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity

- (WEHAB). This would facilitate identification of entities that could be tapped to work with governments in each of these areas.
- c. Dr. Chaiyod (TEI) asked about the focus of the paper on the environment and not on the SD issue; Prof. Habito said this is reflective of the environment emphasis of the GMS countries rather than the more holistic view of SD. Dr. Chaiyod cited possible lessons to be learned from PRC's and Myanmar's implementation of NSDS and asked about relationships between the three levels- GMS, national and local- in SD efforts and. Prof. Habito said there could be combinations of bottom-up and top-down approaches to ensure cohesion of efforts at the various levels.
 - d. Mr. Whang Weizhong explained the experiences in formulating/ implementing PRC's Administrative Center for China Agenda 21 (ACCA21). He described the arrangements at various administrative (from national to local) levels in PRC.
 - e. Dr. Pachauri noted that it would be useful for the process of consultations to expand not only horizontally but also vertically.
 - f. Ms. Antonio directed participants to the web site where experiences of other countries in NSDS/ NCSO establishment could be accessed.
 - g. Mrs. Le Minh Toan (Viet Nam) explained Viet Nam's progress on NSDS implementation, and noted the problems of developing indicators and building capacity.
 - h. Mr. Ieng (Cambodia) asked about the major roadblocks and the role of the private sector in NSDS formulation. He lamented that project proponents often took donors' positions to ensure funding.
 - i. Mr. Rajendran said water is a crucial area which could have its own set of initiatives. However, it would be important to ensure coordination of efforts between the different areas of environment.
 - j. Daw Yin Yin Lay (Myanmar) gave some background on Myanmar Agenda 21. She said that Myanmar does not have the legislation or the ministry yet to coordinate the implementation of Agenda 21. She said UNEP should play a leading role in coordinating the formulation and implementation of the GMS sustainable development strategy.
 - k. Mr. Van Heeswijk said it was clear that the countries could learn from each other and commended Dr. Habito and Dr. Shresta for their excellent presentations.

Working Session II: Institutional Capacity for 2005

18. **Breakout Groups: Vision Statements and Actions to Reach Vision.** For Session II, Ms. Malvicini explained that the participants would be organized according to the same three groups to come up with vision statements, the constraints and potential ways to achieve them. The groups were asked to take both the national and subregional viewpoints, in identifying how the future should look by answering the following in a three-part breakout session:

Part 1- "Project yourself into the 4th quarter of 2005 and develop present tense statements about the institutional capacity in the GMS. Concretely describe the capacity for implementing Agenda 21 and JPOI. Describe the skills, attitudes and understandings. Make 5-8 vision statements. (Some of the visions may pertain to national-level capacity.)"

Part 2- "For each vision statement, indicate some of the barriers that may prevent the vision from being realized."

Part 3- “Finally, indicate some of the potential ways to reach the vision. What structures or mechanisms should be created or strengthened? Describe the capacity needed, and identify the steps to build the capacity.”

19. **Plenary: Group Reports and Identification of Common Themes.** The breakout groups each came out with a three part matrix for presentation in the plenary, i.e., vision/ barriers/ actions. The Secretariat consolidated these matrices by topics (presented as Appendix 5), for refinement the following day. Mr. Khalid Rahman, Director, Infrastructure Division of Mekong Department, chaired the plenary session. Mr. Rahman noted that infrastructure development could be taken as complementary to efforts to achieve SD. Similar to plenary presentations earlier in the day, one member of the group reported the findings, while the other members of the group added to the report as necessary.

20. Mr. Rahman noted that while there were differences in the vision, there was strong convergence in the barriers and actions presented. The underlying trend was the call for more participation of stakeholders and the need for greater transparency in SD processes.

Day 2

21. Mr. C.R. Rajendran, Director, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division, Mekong Department (MKAE), ADB, reconvened the meeting and provided a recap of the previous day’s discussions. Ms. Malvicini explained the plan for the morning session and distributed the [consolidated matrices](#) (Appendix 5) from day 1 for review and further refinement by the participants. Mr. Rolf Zelius, Deputy Director General, RSDD, ADB, who chaired the morning session, noted a number of issues that could be tackled by the participants such as stakeholder participation and integrating poverty reduction in SD.

22. **Plenary Discussion: Comments by Experts and Other Participants.** Mr. Zelius invited the key experts to comment on the ideas generated the previous day, and to offer further ideas for realizing the visions. Experts were also asked to comment on what ADB and UNEP can do, and how the other agencies might cooperate.

23. Mr. Habito noted the following points:

- a. The initial focus of SD efforts in the GMS will inevitably be the environment. This is due to limited appreciation of the holistic nature of SD. Environment ministries were expected to initially act as focal points for SD. During the 1992 Rio Summit, the Philippines was represented by the environment ministry; however, the oversight/ planning agency later took over this SD role;
- b. Poverty should be a priority focus;
- c. Multi-level initiatives (subregional, national, local levels) should be shepherded by oversight agencies at local and national levels; at subregional level, existing arrangements can be tapped (such as the GMS Program);
- d. Public participation of stakeholders should begin with a clear-cut policy from central government, requiring a great deal of political will; subsequently the countries should identify the appropriate organizations to deal with;
- e. Resource providers (i.e. international development organizations) need to coordinate and synergize their efforts for the subregion, preferably through a round table; and
- f. There is a strong need for capacity building and the more advanced GMS countries could assist the others in promoting SD; the form and manner of south-south cooperation could be determined subsequently.

24. Mr. Zelius asked the country delegations for their views on the proposal for the oversight ministry to handle national SD efforts. The country views were as follows:

- a. Daw Yin Yin Lay (Myanmar) suggested that there should be strong coordinating agency for integrating SD in development;
- b. Dr. Monthip (Thailand) said her country supported the formation of the NCSD and provided awards for “sustainable cities”; she announced that the next WGE would be held in Phuket which was also named a sustainable city;
- c. Mrs. Tho (Viet Nam) said its Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) did research on the NCSD in 2001; she said that Viet Nam needs to learn the experiences of other countries on how to implement SD through oversight agencies;
- d. Mrs. Keobang A (Lao PDR) said Lao PDR has expanded the role of its environment ministry, which includes the national poverty alleviation program; she mentioned two possible areas of assistance by ADB such as poverty alleviation and watershed management;
- e. Mr. Luo (PRC) said the PRC government has emphasized SD which covers both environment and development aspects; he hoped that ADB would play a more important role in GMS SD activities through a TA;
- f. Mr. Ieng (Cambodia) asked for ADB and UNEP assistance to establish the NCSD; he opined that two ministries (planning and environment) should work together to set up the NCSD.

25. Mr. Surenda Shresta provided the following points:

- a. Awareness and political commitment are already present in the GMS;
- b. There is a need for capacity building on performance indicators;
- c. A GMS-level secretariat could be established to harmonize subregional efforts;
- d. SD processes should involve finance and planning agencies; in several countries, the prime minister heads the SD council; the processes should also involve civil society;
- e. There is a need to reflect in NSDSs, the various priorities and constraints with poverty reduction as the overarching goal;
- f. Better coordination between bilateral and multilateral agencies is needed, given that a number of projects were found to have similar goals.

26. Mr. Wang Weizhong provided the following comments:

- a. Importance of commitment to SD at higher levels;
- b. Importance of international assistance and support (UNDP and UNEP provided help to PRC in establishing SD strategy);
- c. Proper translation of Agenda 21 goals into national SD strategies;
- d. Establishment of demonstration SD projects at local levels; provincial pilots helped in pushing local entities towards SD;
- e. Successful selection of SD indicators, which could be tested in various communities and various levels;
- f. Civil society stakeholders could help implement and publicize SD efforts;
- g. Need to take into account the country’s specific conditions and priorities in formulating SD action plans; focus on priorities such as water or poverty could help enhance results.

27. Dr. Pachauri provided the following comments:
- a. Believes SD is much broader than environment protection and that SD objectives should be built into development plans and strategies;
 - b. Need for SD to be replicated at local levels; need for innovative solutions at the grassroots level; need to create models of success that would include cross-sectoral initiatives and collaboration of business, academe, government, etc.;
 - c. Need to create a forum or mechanism where various stakeholders can discuss imperatives of SD;
 - d. Need for detailed analysis of natural resource (NR) accounting, how accretion of natural resources bring about wealth of society; important to bring in natural resource accounts into national income accounting;
 - e. Importance of building in sustainability objectives into economic policy decision making; he cited the case of subsidies that could be pursued to achieve desired outcomes; and
 - f. Need to look at impacts of climate change on patterns of economic and social activities.
28. Mr. Kazu Onogawa provided the following comments:
- a. Suggested change in direction of approaches, from the top down, to the bottom up approach; it would be useful to take a more direct approach to local communities, especially in terms of examination of problems and success stories in localities; need to provide opportunities for capacity development to local communities, which could include inviting local government officials to inform them of successful models in other countries and showing them what they could face in failing to pursue SD;
 - b. Defining the role of ADB/ other international organizations in promoting a bottom up approach and to consider support for this direct approach to local communities;
 - c. Practical examples of local community approaches could be presented to NGOs and local governments as targeted groups;
 - d. Financial assistance mechanism could be set up for this approach similar to the US-funded Regional Environment Center (REC) for Central/ Eastern Europe (CEE); the REC's original aim was to support democratization and economic-political stability in CEE countries; however, REC has immensely contributed to the success of environmental programs in CEE.
29. Mr. Zelius noted that a common comment made was the need to engage stakeholders and local communities in SD work. He noted community-based pilot projects that verified the fact that local environmental interventions were cost-efficient ways to promote poverty reduction. He cited ADB's cooperation with World Bank and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) in this area. Mr. Nag noted the increasing synergy in coordination of work between ADB and other international organizations (MRC, GMSARN, World Bank) and he hoped the meeting would result in suggestions to involve civil society in a more structured manner and to develop national institutions for SD activities.
30. Dr. Monthip noted that Thailand has set up the Committee on Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) which is one of the priority areas of the GMS Program. On the Early Warning Information System (EWIS), she said MRC and the GMS Program have been working jointly to address difficulties with certain initiatives such as blasting of rapids in the Upper Mekong. She proposed that the WGE discuss the twin cities program where a city, say in Thailand, will partner with a city in Lao PDR, for the transfer of experiences with SD concepts. Mrs. Keobang

Keola (Lao PDR) asked ADB for help in implementing the proposed strategies under the study on poverty reduction in GMS watersheds.

31. Ms. Antonio suggested a meeting or workshop to discuss experiences of an existing NCSD. She also noted the difficulties in preparing the NSDS and integration of SD in development processes. She said there are ready tools that could be tapped to help GMS countries do integrated SD planning. Dr. Chaiyod emphasized the need for sustainable consumption and educational processes to promote this. He added that methods for developing SD indicators could be obtained from Malaysia. Mr. Hans Friederich said that NGOs have primarily been concerned with how to influence policy. Also, he noted that there were few donors working at the subregional level and that ADB could play a role in encouraging key bilaterals to do more work subregionally. Mr. Rajendran said that the next GMS Ministerial meeting in Dali, PRC, would try to get the bilaterals to take a more GMS-wide strategic view in its development partners meeting. Mr. Lybouapao (Lao PDR) said that an issue is realistic implementation of SD and coordination of agencies involved, especially in policy formulation. He said donors and NGOs should be able to provide governments with inputs in the preparation of the national SD strategy and plan.

Working Session III: Further Actions Needed to Build Needed Capacity

32. **Breakout Groups: Vision and Actions Matrix Refined.** Ms. Malvicini asked the participants to reconvene in three new breakout groups to refine and expand the consolidated matrix based on the plenary discussion. The grouping was based on the general categories of vision/ obstacles actions (based on the consolidated matrix), as follows:

- A. Stakeholder participation and public awareness/ institutional and financial arrangements;
- B. National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs)/ Mainstreaming of SD and National Agendas and Sectors
- C. Subregional Coordination/ Information Systems/ Monitoring and Enforcement

33. Participants selected a group based on their interests. Each group was asked to note major additions or changes for presentation in the final plenary session. The groups were especially asked to: identify the structures or mechanisms that should be created or strengthened; describe and define the capacity needed, and identify the steps to build capacity; identify the linkages necessary to support capacity building initiatives; and describe the role, if any, ADB and UNEP should play in achieving the vision.

Group Reports and Plenary Discussion.

34. Similar to plenary presentations in day 1, one member of the group reported the findings while the other members of the group added to the report as necessary. Appendix 6 contains the [reports developed by the breakout groups A, B and C](#). Mr. Rajendran chaired the plenary session. Highlights of the presentations are as follows:

- a. Group A- The group recommended the guidelines/ tools and structures for stakeholder participation in NSDS; the structure would consist of consultative councils at different levels, and composed of NGO, private sector and local communities; fiscal measures include natural resource accounting, pricing and setting up a system of incentives and disincentives;

- b. Group B- Group members proposed a TA on the Enhancement of GMS Capacity for NSDS Formulation and Institution Building at Local, National and Subregional Level; the plenary noted that the proposed TA's concept paper would be presented in the next WGE meeting and TA activities would serve to mainstream SD in development;
- c. Group C- Suggested review of MRC composition to include PRC and Myanmar; on subregional SD strategy, there is need to define mandates, responsibilities and activities/ roles of international organizations; for SD database, there is need to establish a networking group; criteria for review of performance assessment systems should be established.

35. Mr. Guttman (MRC) explained the work plan of the MRC particularly with respect to the Basin Development Program. Mr. Ieng suggested that MRC disseminate its data/ information through the WGE to be able to cover PRC and Myanmar.

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

36. Mr. Rajendran noted that the ideas/ recommendation made during the meeting provide the basis for designing ADB's assistance to GMS countries on NSDS. He noted that the "how" question was sufficiently addressed in the breakout discussions. In his view, the most important findings were: the existence of strong commitments to SD by the GMS countries; the steps needed to involve stakeholders; the appropriate institutional structure; and capacity building required for this structure. Another important point was that SD should be linked closely with poverty reduction, and should be done sequentially starting with environment. He noted the need for donor involvement and support for the processes of SD. He noted the emphasis on regional cooperation, given the need to look at transboundary impacts of various actions. He expressed that SD indicators could be used for measuring such impacts. He suggested looking at experiences of other countries in developing NSDSs and what these will cover. He noted the suggestions to do pilot projects to demonstrate the benefits. He noted the need for continuing dialogues to make people understand the processes. ADB he said, committed support for SD initiatives, and he cited Group B's blueprint of the TA which ADB could work on. He suggested examining the recommendations on how the development partners could complement their activities especially in capacity building, and to come up with some specific programs WGE should consider. He expressed gratitude to Thailand for agreeing to host the next WGE in Phuket. He thanked the management team and ADB staff for their support and role in organizing the meeting; the panel of experts for their valuable advice and inputs to the breakout groups; the partner agencies for their contributions and participation; and the country delegations for the great teamwork.