

**Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS)
Ninth Meeting of the Subregional
Working Group on Environment (WGE-9)
1-2 December 2003
Phuket, Thailand**

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

1. The Ninth Meeting of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Working Group on Environment (WGE-9) was held in Phuket, Thailand, on 1-2 December 2003. The Department of Environmental Quality Protection (DEQP), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) of the Kingdom of Thailand, hosted the Meeting in cooperation with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

2. The objectives of the meeting were: to present ongoing projects' updates and advance their progress; to disseminate and share information on GMS country developments in the area of environmental policy/ governance; to promote closer donor coordination in environmental programs in the GMS; to broaden participation of development partners in the WGE; and to discuss the proposed GMS Environment Road Map. Attached is Agenda and Program of the meeting ([Appendix 1](#)).

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. Observers/ resource persons from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as ADB staff and consultants also attended. The list of participants is attached as [Appendix 2](#).

4. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr. Monthip Tabucanon, Director General, Department of Environmental Quality Protection (DEQP), MONRE, Kingdom of Thailand and Mr. C. R. Rajendran, Director, Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Division, MKAE, Mekong Department, ADB.

Session I- Opening Session (Chair: Mr. Surin Wiwatchanasirin, Department Secretary, DEQP, MONRE, Thailand)

5. Mr. Surin Wiwatchanasirin, Department Secretary, DEQP, delivered the welcome address for Dr. Monthip Tabucanon, Director-General, DEQP, who had an interview on Thai national television regarding environment programs on the occasion of the King's birthday. He welcomed all participants to the WGE meeting and expressed gratitude to the ADB for its support to Thailand over the years. He cited the four strategic areas of Thailand's 9th Economic and Social Development Plan (2002- 2006): economic stability/ sustainability; social protection and environmentally sustainable development; good governance at all levels; and poverty reduction and empowerment of Thai people through knowledge based society. He said increased willingness of countries to cooperate in recent years has made implementation of initiatives less arduous. He said the current situation provides excellent prospects for economic, social and political stability in the GMS, and explained each of these indications, such as

continuing commitments of donor assistance, progressive national policies, pro-market reforms, and greater awareness of need for self-reliance. He said GMS development is also driven by current and emerging challenges for natural resource management. He added that Thailand is committed to regional cooperation with GMS countries and has made efforts to protect natural resources and environment, as well as sustainable consumption patterns. He stressed Thailand's commitment to cooperation among GMS countries, as well as sustainable consumption and production patterns to fight poverty. He stressed that the goal of policies should contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals. He concluded by thanking the representatives of GMS countries, ADB, and UNEP for their contributions to the WGE and wished everyone a pleasant stay in Phuket.

6. Mr. Nessim Ahmed, Director, Environment and Social Safeguard Division (RSES), Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD), ADB, extended his warm welcome to the WGE-9 meeting and thanked MONRE for the excellent meeting arrangements. He cited the GMS Program as an international model for successful cooperation and noted that the environment is one of its key flagship programs with the WGE as the backbone of regional cooperation efforts. He provided the mandate of the WGE and cited its accomplishments, such as the Subregional Environmental Monitoring and Information System project (SEMIS) phases I and II, and the Strategic Environment Framework (SEF) project phase I. He said the WGE has recently shifted gears, embarking on ground breaking new programs such as SEF II. He added that SEF II would involve national and subregional environmental performance assessment. This would be crucial in discussing the GMS environment road map and the future of the flagship program. He updated the meeting of ADB-wide developments such as the ADB's Environment Policy established last year, and he explained each of the policy's five main thrusts. The second was the issuance of revised Environmental Assessment Guidelines in July 2003. Next was the approval of ADB's direct access to the GEF, allowing more future GEF projects in the GMS. The fourth was ADB's establishment of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) facility. The last was the establishment of the Poverty and Environment Fund (PEF) with contributions by Sweden and Norway, to promote effective environmental management to reduce poverty. He hoped for substantive discussions over the next two days on the GMS environment agenda.

7. Mr. C. R. Rajendran, Director, MKAE, ADB, welcomed the participants to WGE-9 and thanked the host for the wonderful arrangements in the beautiful island city of Phuket. He was pleased to see once more the GMS environment focal persons, who attended the Experts Meeting in Manila in August 2003. He said the WGE-9 meeting would provide the needed follow through in terms of sharing information on GMS country developments in environmental policy and governance, and the promotion of closer donor coordination in environmental programs in the GMS. On the latter point, he echoed the call of GMS Ministers in their Dali meeting last September 2003, for more comprehensive involvement of development partners in the GMS Program. He explained this to mean expanding the role of the private sector, NGOs, and the academe in the GMS Program. He cited the pioneering work of the WGE in the past where the NGOs and academe actively participated in WGE deliberations and implementation of technical assistance projects. He noted the improvements since then in ADB's policy of engagement with the NGOs through the recent adoption of the new "ADB- Government- NGO Cooperation: Framework for Action, 2003-2005. He discussed a new TA project, which will seek NGOs' views on poverty reduction strategies for ADB's GMS Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program (RCSP). He explained that the WGE-9 would discuss the GMS Environment Road Map that would provide the following: manner of cooperation needed for transboundary impacts of development; how to have more meaningful stakeholder involvement in sustainable development processes in the GMS; and how ADB could work with development partners in

institutional/ capacity building for sustainable development. He recalled that the August 2003 Experts Meeting proposed a TA to assist GMS countries in preparing National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs), which involves building GMS capacities in implementing the Johannesburg recommendations. The WGE-9 meeting, he noted, would discuss various aspects of this proposal, and WGE inputs would help make the TA more connected with national capacity building requirements of GMS countries. He wished the WGE meeting productive discussions and concrete agreements for the next two days.

8. Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Director, Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific, UNEP, extended his warm greetings to the WGE participants on behalf of his colleagues also present in the meeting.

Session II- The GMS Program: Reviewing Progress (Chair: Mr. Surendra Shrestha, Director, Regional Office of Asia and Pacific, UNEP)

12th GMS Ministerial Conference

9. Mr. Rajendran reported on the outcome of the 12th GMS Ministerial Conference held in Dali in September 2003. He noted the history of strife in the GMS and stressed that the advent of peace in the subregion provided immense opportunities for improving the lives of the peoples of the GMS. He noted that the GMS Program, which commenced in 1992, marked its first decade with the First GMS Summit of Leaders where the vision of a prosperous, equitable and more integrated GMS was enunciated. He then showed the institutional arrangements and the nine priority sectors for cooperation under the GMS Program, which constituted the building blocks of GMS cooperation. He enumerated the five strategic thrusts as well as the 11 flagship programs of the GMS Strategic Framework (GMS-SF) adopted to guide cooperation in the second decade of the GMS Program. He showed a map of the three major GMS economic corridors, which would be pursued as priority areas under the holistic, multi-sectoral approach adopted of the new GMS-SF. He cited the progress to date of the GMS Program, led by the funding of 15 projects worth \$2.2 billion by ADB, GMS Governments and cofinanciers, and development of policy frameworks to facilitate trade within the subregion. He also cited the numerous HRD initiatives on health and education, and for poverty reduction being pursued under the GMS Program. He explained the thrusts of GMS cooperation in the Agriculture and Environment sectors, with the latter focusing on development of a sound monitoring/ information system and a workable Strategic Environment Framework.

10. Mr. Rajendran then gave brief review of the Dali GMS Ministerial Meeting. Comprised of the Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM), Development Partners' Meeting (DPM), and Ministerial Meeting (MM), the Dali meeting was the first since the GMS Summit in November 2003. He said the Dali meeting was extremely well organized by the PRC hosts and had 250 participants, including from the private sector for the first time. He listed the following key outcomes of the Dali meeting: emphasis on theme of increased connectivity, enhanced competitiveness and sense of community; ADB to move from facilitating to leadership role; request for private sector participation in all aspects of GMS; welcoming more comprehensive involvement of development partners; and announcement of new subregional linkages in the context of GMS framework. The DPM on the second day had about 40 participants and confirmed ADB's lead role in the GMS. Japan reconfirmed strong commitment, while France and the World Bank announced new commitments in support of the GMS. He concluded by stating the Dali meeting was an excellent follow up to the GMS Summit, in that it reaffirmed the strong commitment by GMS countries to move ahead more quickly, and reflected the substantial interest from development partners.

Subregional Environmental Monitoring and Information Systems Phase II (SEMIS II)

11. Mr. Ding Ding Tang, Deputy Director General of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), PRC, gave a background on the recently completed SEMIS II project. He presented the overall objective of the SEMIS II, which is to build upon the achievements of SEMIS I. The latter provided mechanisms to allow information sharing on environment/ natural resources in a timely manner. He cited the key objectives/ scope of SEMIS II, which includes assessing the availability of relevant data for planning, strengthening capacity of GMS governments to process data, and updating existing GIS database. He added that while SEMIS I defined the core dataset and meta-data format, SEMIS II assessed the current data available and used the format to populate the core database. He listed the seven major components of SEMIS II, which includes assessment of currently available data, capacity building, development of mechanism for data exchange, organization of workshops and updating of existing GIS database. He explained the implementation arrangements made for the project, with UNEP Regional Resource Center for Asia and Pacific (RRC-AP) as executing agency, and provided an evaluation of the inputs used for SEMIS II.

12. Mr. Tang provided the outputs of the project, which includes guidelines for effective data collection and management, manual on the Integrated Economic and Environmental Development Planning (IEEDP), GIS database for GMS, workshops/ training courses at national and regional levels, and GMS Environmental Atlas, among others. Mr. Tang proposed follow up actions of the project as follows: need for a coordinated effort to integrate environmental and socio-economic data; further development of IEEDP concept to better address sustainable development and different development priorities of GMS members; and need for establishing the network for information sharing. He concluded by thanking ADB for inviting him once more to participate in the WGE and looked forward to future interaction with the group.

13. **Comments.** Mr. Surendra Shrestha noted the lack of information as a major obstacle in environmental monitoring and stressed the importance of sharing and networking to address this obstacle. On the SEMIS II, Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Hien from Viet Nam called for the WGE and GMS member countries strengthen cooperation in sharing information on environmental protection and forecast. GMS Atlas, Ms. Hien requested ADB delay the publication of GMS Atlas till the receipt of all GMS member countries' comments on the GMS Atlas. Viet nam is processing this and will send the official comments to the ADB as soon as possible. For the moment, GMS Atlas is appreciated as a result of the TA project.

National Performance Assessment and SEF II

14. Mr. Masami Tsuji, Environment Specialist, RSES, ADB, recalled that he presented the concept and draft proposal for SEF in WGE-8 in April last year, and got the endorsement of countries in September 2002. He recalled that GEF approval of project was obtained in December 2002 as a medium sized project. He noted the activities already held for SEF II, including the finalization of the implementation plan. He introduced Dr. Yuwaree In-na, Senior Program Specialist, UNEP- RRC- AP and the project manager for SEF II.

15. Dr. Yuwaree introduced Mr. Tin Ang Moe (Program Specialist, UNEP-RRC-AP) as a member of SEF II team and provided the presentation outline for the SEF II project. She noted the three phases of the project, namely, the Inception Phase, the Implementation Phase, and the Dissemination Phase, and added that the presentation would provide a preview of what has been achieved and the progress of the SEF II project. She said that the Project Implementation

Plan (third revision) would be presented, highlighting the revisions since the First Expert Group Meeting. He said the next phase would deal with the national level activities under the project.

16. She showed a slide on the project phasing and main activities of the SEF II project, indicating the timeline for the three phases of the project. For the Inception Phase (January-December 2003) she noted the milestones under each of the following: project team set up; implementation plan preparation; and recruitment of consultants. She then briefly explained the major agreements/ proposals during the First Experts Group Meeting (UNEP-RRC, July 2003) and the Inception Workshop (Manila, August 2003). The 3rd revision of the Project Implementation Plan, she noted, includes changes on the National Project Management Office (NPMO), work plan adjustment, terms of reference of consultants, suggested wordings in some sections, and data collection issue. She then noted the agreed requirements for the NPMO, including office space, office facilities and office operation.

17. She enumerated the major activities under the Implementation Phase, which includes prototype development, country specific activities and subregional specific activities. For prototype development, key milestones such as the 2nd Expert Group Meeting (November 2003) and Technical Workshop (Dec. 2003 or Jan. 2004) were cited. Four technical papers being prepared were also noted, which includes conceptual framework for an environmental performance assessment (EPA) and proposed guidelines on environmental indicators development. She presented the major agreements during the 2nd Expert Group Meeting in Kunming, which includes the agreed conceptual framework for EPA. She showed a flow chart of the country specific activities beginning with the set up of the Project Management Office (PMO) in Dec. 2003, to the establishment of National Coordination Committee (NCC) in Jan. 2004, and to the various National Workshops. The latter will be undertaken in March 2004 (I), July 2004 (II), and Oct. 2004 (III). She showed a table listing the timing of the 12 country specific activities to be conducted in 11 months from Dec. 2003 to Oct. 2004. She followed this with a table listing the subregional specific activities for 12 months from Nov. 2004 to Oct. 2005. For the Dissemination Phase, she enumerated the three major activities from January to December 2005: website development/ updating; documents/ media production and dissemination; and subregional and regional workshop.

18. **Comments.** Daw Yin Yin Lay asked about the need to budget for data collection and case studies of national PMOs. Dr. Yuwaree welcomed estimates from PMOs but clarified some activities would be done by international, and local consultants. Mr. Ieng suggested fixed allocation per country for case studies, but Dr. Yuwaree said the need for certain case studies would depend on outcomes from discussions at national coordinating level. He suggested a format be adopted for case studies. Dr. Yuwaree said the framework for case studies would be clearer as the project moves forward. Mr. Tang clarified that case studies are local level studies, as against sector studies, and Mr. Tsuji added additional insights on what case studies would cover. Ms. Hien suggested priority be given to implementation by local consultants, and that international consultants should provide only general guidelines. She reaffirmed Viet Nam government's support for poverty reduction and environment protection efforts. Ms. Keobang A proposed national institutional arrangements for the National Council on Sustainable Development (NCSD). Mr. Rajendran assured WGE members' comments on the Atlas would be conveyed to the ADB group preparing this.

19. The revised Implementation Plan was distributed during the meeting and was approved by the WGE members.

Session III- Progress Reports: Country Environmental Policy and Program Developments (Chair: Mr. C. R. Rajendran, Director, MKAE, ADB)

Cambodia

20. Mr. Chuon Chanrithy, Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment, provided a background on Cambodia's environment efforts at the time of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. He gave a history of Cambodia's first mandated government since 1993 and described its legal systems (constitution, laws, decrees, etc.). He gave the organizational chart for the Ministry of Environment (established in 1993) and explained the Royal Decree on the Creation of Protected Areas. He summarized the provisions on the environment in the constitution and laws, as well as the 1st Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP I) 1996-2000 and National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) 1998-2002. He discussed the natural resource management actions of Cambodia's 2nd mandated government (since 1998) which rests on: environment and natural resources; socio-economic and cross-sector commitment; and international commitment. He explained the objectives, plans, and policies on economic reform and the existing environmental policy and measures. He cited the issuance of the Multi-sectoral National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in 2002. He said the MOE has evolved from an agency addressing environment concerns to one operating under cross-sectoral SD principles. He then discussed Cambodia's policies/ activities in the following areas: economic instruments (such as membership in WTO); cleaner production/ technology; social policies/ public participation; environment information, education and awareness; and multilateral environmental agreement/ conventions. Finally, he gave a list of Cambodia's policies, regulations and agreements on environmental protection, human/ social development, and regional cooperation.

21. **Comments.** Mr. Rajendran asked about how effectively the laws/ policies are being implemented. Mr. Chanrithy replied that extensive institutional capacity building is being undertaken to address implementation problems. Mr. Ieng relayed the challenges in propagating environmental management awareness, especially among the youth.

PRC

22. Mr. Luo Gaolai, Deputy Director, Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, SEPA, presented PRC's environmental policy and governance developments, including on international cooperation and key challenges and responses for regional cooperation. He commenced with a survey of developments in policy, institutions, and programs for environmental management and governance at both the national and provincial levels. He noted the national strategy, where a Program of Action for Sustainable Development in the Early 21st Century was issued in February 2003. He mentioned the issuance of two new environmental laws on EIA and on clean production. As for Yunnan Provincial Strategy, Mr. Luo said that a development strategy for the early 21st century was formulated for Yunnan. He said the Provincial Tenth Five Year Plan for environmental protection was approved and implemented and has specific targets by 2005. He then provided information on international cooperation, such as Yunnan Environmental Development Program, which will assist Yunnan in developing innovative approaches to environment and poverty-related policy making. He cited several projects being developed, such as UNEP/ GEF project on conservation and flood control on the Yangtze River Basin, and the biodiversity protection program in PRC's Southwest (EC supported). Finally, he discussed the key challenges and proposed responses in the context of regional cooperation. These included: strengthening capacity building/ experience exchange; regional training in environmental information management; capacity building for SD in Yunnan; and enhancing information exchange on watershed management.

23. **Comments.** Mr. Rajendran cited the quantifiable targets of PRC that could serve as models for the SEF II's efforts to develop performance assessment indicators.

Lao PDR

24. Ms. Keobang A Keola, Deputy Director General of Cabinet, Science, Technology and Environment Agency (STEA) presented on developments in environmental policy management in Lao PDR. She summarized the steps taken by the Government to ensure sustainable management of the country's natural resource base over the last 10 years. These include establishment of the Science Technology and Environment Agency (STEA) in 1993, the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP) in 1994, and more recently, the establishment of the inter-ministerial National Environment Committee in 2002. She detailed the STEA's activities, in following the provisions of the NEAP. On the institutional side, she listed the lessons learned on environmental management, which is supported by a well-coordinated international and regional program, and also a factor for attaining national targets and regional integration. She then enumerated the various environment programs of the Government as follows: environmentally sustainable management of renewable resources; improved management of non-renewable natural resources; and improved institutional framework and capacity building. On international cooperation, she reiterated Lao PDR's commitment to upgrade environmental management at regional and international level and to implement its obligations under Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA). She cited the lessons learned in recent years such as integration of environment into socio-economic planning, and support and coordination with international programs. She cited the plans to cover both renewable resources and non-renewable natural resources. She noted that the top priority is the plan for capacity building in environmental management, which involves setting up institutions from central to grassroots level, legal framework and institutions, and monitoring functions, among others. She explained the international assistance Lao PDR receives for the environment, which includes support for expertise, training and networking. She then enumerated the challenges posed by environmental degradation in Lao PDR, which include, among others, people's reliance on resource base for livelihood, modernization of infrastructure, and increased consumption. One response she noted is developing implementation and monitoring strategies to monitor compliance.

Lunch Break

25. After the lunch break, Mr. Rajendran welcomed back Dr. Monthip, and thanked her for overseeing logistical arrangements for the meeting.

Myanmar

26. Daw Yin Yin Lay, Joint Secretary, National Commission for Environmental Affairs (NCEA), presented on development in environmental management and governance in Myanmar. On environmental policy developments, she highlighted the adoption of Myanmar Forest Policy in 1995, which identified six imperatives to achieve broader national goals: protection of soil, water, wildlife, biodiversity and environment; sustainability of forest resources; basic needs of people; efficiency in harnessing forest resources; participation of people in conservation; and public awareness of forests' role in development. On institutional development, she cited the NCEA's formation in 1990, and elevation as commission in 1992, as the key coordinating mechanism for SD. She said upgrading of the NCEA is being considered in view of Myanmar's growing environmental commitments. She cited the

formulation and adoption of Myanmar Agenda 21 in 1997 to provide the framework for SD, and she enumerated the SD strategies relating to social dimensions, and economic development, environmental protection and conservation. She noted that no national environmental plan embraces all three pillars of SD, with only partial integration of environment and development. She discussed a number of SD programs being carried out by various ministries, which include programs on: sustainable forestry; conservation of biological diversity; combating desertification and drought; combating poverty; promoting sustainable human settlement development; and promoting environmental education, public awareness and training. She said Myanmar has received little foreign assistance, only through regional TA projects from ALAGS and GMS and small TA from UNEP, ESCAP and HSF. She noted the gaps in implementing global Agenda 21 and national SD agenda, and financial constraints, as well as lack of technology and human capacity, hamper implementation of global/ national SD programs. She added that regional/ subregional programs are needed to achieve SD and Johannesburg targets.

Thailand

27. Dr. Monthip Tabucanon, Director General, DEQP, provided the state of Thailand's natural resources and environment, showing data on forest/ conservation forest area, biodiversity, mangrove forest and marine ecosystem, mineral resources, surface water and groundwater, river water quality, air quality, central wastewater treatment, and solid waste management. She explained the Sustainable Cities program, meant to promote cities' development within Local Agenda 21 framework, and cited the pilot projects. She enumerated the environmental natural and cultural heritage sites. She listed the various strategies and public service agreements (PSA) relating to each strategy. She discussed the potential for development in the environment, providing the 10-year targets for such areas as: tourism in national parks; conservation and wildlife; marine and coastal resources; marine complex; brackish water system; Songkhla Lake; mineral resource management; coastal erosion; surface and ground water management; Mae-Ping watershed management; environmental pollution; sustainable cities; and natural and cultural environment. She cited the environment management challenges such as differences in database management, insufficient management system, multi-layered bureaucracy, and inflexible regulations. She gave the targets for addressing these management challenges. She noted the Master Plan for Natural Resources, approved by the Thai Cabinet in January 2003, meant to rehabilitate natural resources and environment by 2013. She explained the problems with public participation in natural resources and environment conservation, marked by conflicts between people and state, and insufficient public participation regulation. She added that MONRE is the national GIS database center. On national policy, she explained the problem of national land management organization, marked by lack of policy/appropriate management, trespassing of state property, and soil erosion. She listed the various national land management agencies and their targets for integrated policy planning, management and strategies. As for the biodiversity problem, Dr. Monthip said MONRE is the national focal agency for conservation, control and monitoring, sustainable usage, and enacting biodiversity agreement.

28. **Comments.** Mr. Rajendran hoped the environment campaign would succeed as much as previous campaigns in Thailand. Mr. Chanrithy asked for sources of GIS information and Dr. Monthip referred him to the website address of DEQP and other sources of information.

Viet Nam

29. Mr. Nguyen Hoang Duc, Expert, Environment Department, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, presented the five major environmental policy developments in Viet Nam. The first was the adoption of the environmental protection strategy up to 2010 and orientation activities up to 2020. He explained that the main objectives of this strategy are to limit pollution, remedy degradation and improve quality, properly exploit natural resources, proactively comply with international environmental requirements, and promote sustainable development. The second development was the decree no. 67 on collecting taxes on wastewater. The objectives of this decree included limiting environmental pollution from waste water and economizing use of water. The third was the Government decree no. 109 on the conservation and sustainable development of wetlands, whose objectives include, among others, the elimination of unsustainable wetlands use, and conservation of wetlands biodiversity. The fourth concerned the decision of the Prime Minister to monitor and punish organizations that cause serious environmental pollution. Mr. Duc then enumerated the six domestic duties in proposal and implementation, which includes, among others: report on situation of Viet Nam environment in 2003; management activities in the river basins; evaluation of Environmental Protection Law and reform of environmental legislation; and study on building mechanisms/ policies to meet international environmental requirements. He then enumerated the projects, classified into domestic and regional projects. Domestic projects included, among others: sustainable usage of medicinal plants; improving energy usage of small and medium enterprises; protection of Konplong forest community; building green corridor; and developing renewable energy resource. Regional projects included, among others: program of biological diversity plan for South/ Southeast Asia; biological diversity conservation in floodplains in the Mekong; building capacity for greenhouse gas control at national level; and conservation/ effective usage of wetlands in the basin.

General Observations on Country Presentations

30. Mr. Rajendran noted that the country presentations covered much ground and reflected the strong commitment to environmental management and conservation by the GMS countries. The presentations also showed a great deal of direction and sensitivity to international developments. He noted common elements among the reports. One was the felt need for capacity building. Another was the need for standardization, harmonization and quality control, in environmental performance indicators. He added that the issue of sustainable management of resources (renewable and non-renewable) was also commonly addressed. Further common elements he observed were the need for enhancing stakeholder participation, awareness building, and protection of culture. He noted however, two important issues that were not raised by any country. One was the need to look at groundwater resources at this early stage; at present, abundance of surface water has relegated the groundwater issue into the background. Another issue that did not come out, was the need to examine the efficiency of the management structures for the environment. Mr. Rajendran noted that there are different types of organizational arrangements for environmental management in the GMS, depending on what individual countries deem appropriate. However, he stressed that it was important to look at the efficiency of these arrangements, especially in the light of regional cooperation imperatives.

31. Mr. Masami Tsuji suggested that future country presentations provide largely annual updates since past reporting has already provided general country environment information. This way the WGE participants could accumulate annual information on country developments that could help prepare subregional environment reports or project proposals. Mr. Thuren (SIDA) said the country presentations provided a good opportunity to share information on the

environment. Mr. Meng (MRC) however observed that the reports did not focus enough on programs for shared management of the Mekong basin. Ms. Manida Unkulaskul (World Bank) observed the differences in capacity for environmental management, and asked if future WGE meetings could focus on specific needs of GMS countries that donors could look into for possible future funding support. Mr Rajendran said the WGE is indeed the proper forum for exploring areas for regional cooperation, which could qualify for donor assistance. The WGE in the past looked at new proposals put forward by ADB in response to requests of GMS countries. Mr. Tang suggested that the GMS Secretariat develop the format and outline of presentations, which could allow for varying topics yearly; one possible topic, for example, could be international cooperation and suggested future directions for cooperation. Prof. Das Gupta agreed with Mr. Rajendran's suggestion to focus more on groundwater issues in the future, looking at GMS countries' capacities for water storage.

Session IV- Coordination of International Assistance (Chair: Mr. Ieng Sovannora, Adviser to Minister, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia)

MRC

32. Mr. Monyrak Meng, Programme Officer, Environment Program, MRC, gave an update of the activities and various programs of the MRC. He started with the Basin Development Plan (BDP), and provided the outputs of the first planning phase. He gave the status of the various sub-area studies of the BDP and listed the various achievements in terms of the workshops held, and guidelines, discussion papers and reports prepared. He then presented the Water Utilization Program (WUP) and its three main components: basin modeling and knowledge base; rules for water utilization; and capacity strengthening. He presented the progress of activities for each of the working groups under the WUP. These are: WG1- Basin Modeling Package and Knowledge Base; WG2- Environment and Transboundary Analysis; and WG3- Rules Formulation. For the Environment Programme, he showed the progress from October 2002 to November 2003, which includes: modernizing water quality monitoring; ecological health monitoring; transboundary EIA tools and risk assessment; and training and information sharing.

33. For the Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP), Mr. Meng gave the FMMP objective of preventing people's suffering and economic losses due to floods, while preserving floods' environmental benefits. He explained FMMP's priorities: early warning to vulnerable communities; capacity building for preparedness planning and response; and annual flood forum. He gave the new structure of the FMMP and its five components comprising the following: establishment of regional FMM centre; flood proofing and structural measures; mediation of transboundary flood issues; flood emergency and management strengthening; and land use management. He explained the requirements of implementing the 1995 Agreement, given the lack of funding for some activities. He noted the cooperation MRC has with various development partners (Belgium, Japan, UNDP), NGOs (WWF, IUCN), as well as special research/ river basin groups such as MRAG (Marine Research Assessment Group), CSA-NRC (Canadian Space Agency and Natural Resource Canada), ACIR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research), and NARBO (Network of Asian River Basin Organizations).

34. **Comments.** Dr. Monthip asked for elaboration on the work with other MRC partners. Mr. Meng provided a brief on the joint programs MRC is undertaking with its various partners. Dr. Monthip requested for briefing materials on these joint programs. Dr. Monthip noted that GEF capacity building programs of MRC should be coordinated with the GMS countries to avoid duplication in coverage with country GEF proposals. Mr. Thuren said SIDA would continue

supporting MRC programs as in the past. Mr. Ieng asked MRC's thinking to bring PRC and Myanmar into MRC activities. Mr. Meng said MRC has been conducting annual dialogues with PRC and Myanmar.

UNEP

35. Mr. Surendra Shrestha, UNEP, provided a background of the Asia-Pacific region covered by the UNEP-RRC-AP and that given the region's vast area and multitude of problems, UNEP has been asked to provide more programs for capacity building, especially at the national level. He showed the various subregions that are the focus of programs within the Asia Pacific region. He gave the UNEP-RRC-AP's program of work for regional implementation. He provided UNEP's strategy/ goals and services; the latter included science assessment, issues (emerging and priority), policy setting, and policy implementation. He said that given resource constraints, UNEP focuses on 2-3 countries per subregion, with a budget of \$1.5 million per country. At the subregional level, he explained that UNEP assists in civil society consultations and inter-governmental consultations. He showed the subregional priority issues consistent with the framework for environmental assessment and sustainable development. He then explained the activities of the Knowledge Center. On emerging issues, he showed the three issues UNEP is currently working on, such as atmospheric brown cloud (ABC), glacial lake outburst cloud, and dust and sandstorms, which are all climate change related issues. Emerging issues that the UNEP would focus on, included e-waste, freshwater, MEA capacity building and awareness building for legislators and business leaders. On implementation issues, he discussed the Subregional Environmental Policy Dialogue (SEPD) which was to provide policy advice to UNEP's regional programme of work. He gave the SEPD's purpose, membership and outcomes. Mr. Shrestha said that ministers and governments indicated that priority attention should be given to the following areas: for land- bio-house or zero emission house (rain, water, waste, energy); for air- vehicles (clean, hybrid, fuel cell); and for water (hydropower and hydrogen, which is the energy of the future). He cited the efforts to test the pilot technologies for these areas. He then showed the staff resources of UNEP-RRC-AP, in relation to the core/ outposted functions and financial resources available to it. He added that UNEP-RRC also hosts the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) Secretariat. He showed the objective, participants and outcomes of the UNEP Tongji Institute to develop the third generation of environmental education through a holistic approach to SD. He showed slides on the "Search for Champions of the Earth" and vacancy announcements at UNEP.

36. **Comments.** Dr. Monthip expressed appreciation for UNEP's work and asked what assistance UNEP would give to the GMS. Mr. Shrestha mentioned UNEP support for environment projects under the GMS Program as discussed in the WGE. He also mentioned the various UNEP programs for ASEAN and for individual GMS countries. Dr. Monthip asked how the WB, ADB and UNEP divide their work on the GMS environment sector. Mr. Rajendran clarified that except for the MRC's WUP, the WB does not have a regional environment program. However, he noted the WB's announcement in Dali, that it would review areas for possible expansion of regional cooperation assistance; he hoped that WB would build up its program for GMS. He mentioned that ADB has partnership arrangement with MRC, citing ADB's support for the flood management program. ADB he said would work closely with SIDA on joint programs with MRC. He noted the initiatives within ADB, which could be tapped to collaborate with other partners for GMS projects. Dr. Monthip noted that environment courses abroad had many African participants funded by WB and asked if WB could also support GMS participants. Ms. Manida clarified that the WB has large IDA programs in Africa, which are tapped to finance study grants. However, she noted also that in Asia, Finance Ministries do not give priority to training/ scholarship programs. Mr. Thuren asked if it was possible to use MRC's WUP outputs

for SEF II; Dr. Yuwaree explained that SEF II's proposed structure for environmental indicator database includes linking with MRC as well as other databases.

Universities Partnership for Transboundary Waters

37. Prof. Ashim Das Gupta, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) said the partnership started with the Asian Water Forum held in 1995 and the Workshop on Transboundary Water held in 1999. He briefed on the AIT and its strategic role in capacity building, particularly on emerging areas, such as water resources management (WRM). He showed the various WRM issues, highlighted by degradation of water quality. He explained the restructuring of the curriculum on water engineering and management (WEM) course, and discussed its current and future research emphasis. He added that another important area of WEM is training and organizing workshops. He explained the rationale behind the study of water allocation, which is a future source of conflict; he also expounded on the ideal objective of water allocation.

38. Ms. Marcia Macomber, Director of Program Development, Universities Partnership for Transboundary Waters, Oregon State University, explained that the universities partnership is meant to promote peace, environmental protection, and human security through transboundary water education, outreach and research. She proceeded with quotes from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on the importance of cooperation for a sustainable water future. She explained that, worldwide, there are 263 international basins and showed slides demonstrating the number and severity of events arising from water issues. She also showed a table summarizing treaty statistics concerning water cooperation. She then explained the project's objective, i.e., to enhance capacity worldwide to address and prevent transboundary waters conflict and environmental degradation. She listed the three program areas: education and training; outreach and information resources; and applied research. She gave highlights of existing resources, including the five continental nodes (academic institutions) linked by the project. She presented specific activities under each of these program areas. For education and training she stressed international and multidisciplinary learning environment and case based applied learning, among others. For outreach and information, she listed multi-scalar digital libraries, interactive IT tools, communication networks, and expertise database. For applied research she noted the various collaborative studies being undertaken under the project.

39. Ms. Macomber gave the current status of the project, citing the support provided by various donors, such as OSU, Carnegie, UNESCO, UNEP, UNDP, and conduct of regional river basin workshops. She noted that the Global Environment Facility supported a Medium Sized Project (MSP) which is a \$1 million, two-year program involving professional training and conduct of baseline study on World Vulnerability Atlas. She then enumerated the various areas of the GEF- supported professional training courses and provided the timeline for the GEF MSP.

40. **Comments.** Dr. Monthip observed that in conflict resolution, there is a need to assist developing countries in formulation of public participation policies. She noted Thailand's efforts to train officials in conflict resolution. Ms. Keobang A supported Dr. Monthip's views on conflict resolution. Mr. Shrestha said however, that a more regionally based program would be more suitable for designing courses. Mr. Ahmad announced GEF Council's new capacity building initiative, which opens new opportunities for projects. He however said there was a concern that global programs do not have sufficient country ownership. He agreed with Mr. Shrestha that having regional programs could lead to more appropriate courses. Ms. Hien asked whether the partnership helps develop mechanisms to guide countries. Ms. Macomber said the partnership could provide training, which could guide officials in developing mechanisms for conflict resolution.

Day 2

Recap of Previous Day's Discussions

41. Mr. Rajendran provided a summary of the previous day's discussions. He noted that the opening statements provided the proper setting for the work of the WGE. He also noted that the country presentations raised a number of issues and concerns such as need for capacity building, raising awareness and involving the private sector. He hoped for stronger coordination among development partners, especially after the World Bank has firmed up its regional cooperation program. He said the day 1 discussions helped set the stage for the discussions in day 2 meeting, particularly on capacity building for implementing the GMS countries' Johannesburg commitments. He also wished to obtain the WGE's views on bringing on board other development partners in the working group, in line with the call of GMS Ministers during the Dali Conference. He also said that the Environment Sector Road Map would be taken up, which is part of the GMS ADB's Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program (RCSP). Finally, he took note of the good progress being made on SEF II project and expressed satisfaction at the assistance being provided by OECD.

Session V- Future GMS Environment Technical Assistance (Chair: Mr. Luo Gaolai, Deputy Director General, SEPA, PRC)

42. Mr. Subrato Sinha (UNEP) introduced the draft TA for Capacity Building on Promoting Sustainable Development in the GMS, which was proposed during the Experts Meeting in Manila in August 2003. He emphasized that given the commitments of GMS countries to Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), there is an express need to develop a NSDS by 2005. Unfortunately he noted that many developing countries do not have NSDS. He said NSDS would provide the opportunity to integrate a country's policies and strategies, and promoting a multi-stakeholder coordinating structure (national level). This he said would facilitate preparation of subregional sustainable development strategy (SSDS) reflecting common and transboundary issues. He cited the lessons learned from existing processes and explained how these are relevant to consider for the proposed TA. Mr. Sinha said that the TA therefore would finance the formulation of NSDS and SSDS through a participatory approach. He said the TA would also assist in establishment of a multi-stakeholders' platform, like the National Council on Sustainable Development (NCSD) at national level to bring all stakeholders (government, business, civil society) to a common platform to prepare and implement NSDS.

43. Mr. Sinha noted the objectives of the TA, which are as follows: to assist GMS countries with preparation of NSDS; to establish a multi-stakeholders structure or body or NCSD; and promote the establishment of a subregional forum to pursue SSDS. He gave the scope of the TA which includes the following: developing country specific guidelines for NSDS; developing country specific guidelines for NCSD; establishing a multi-stakeholders structure or NCSD; and preparing NSDS to integrate SD objectives in existing policies and strategies; etc. He proposed the TA be implemented in close collaboration with GMS member countries, UNEP, intergovernmental agencies, civil society organizations, and relevant international and donor agencies. He said the TA would be implemented over a two- year period, with a TA Agreement to be signed with partner agencies. He then provided and briefly explained the terms of

reference for consulting services to be engaged to prepare the NSDS/ NCSD guidelines and NSDS reports.

44. Mr. Rajendran recalled the genesis of the proposal, which he traced to the Experts Meeting in Manila in August 2003. He recalled the important recommendations made by the three breakout groups during the said Experts Meeting. He said financial issues came up prominently during this meeting and cited Lao PDR's efforts at setting up an Environment Fund. Also figuring strongly was the issue of capacity building on environmental management and sustainable development, especially in integrating sustainability concerns in economic development planning. He said the proposed TA is an attempt to address this issue.

45. **Comments.** Mr. Luo invited comments on the objectives and scope of proposal, considering the project's budget. Ms. Keobang A expressed Lao PDR's concurrence to the proposal. She suggested sharing of lessons from the World Bank's World Development Report 2003, which contained important SD insights. Daw Yin Yin Lay asked if the TA will include all six GMS countries. Mr. Rajendran replied that ADB would try its best to meet Myanmar's requirements, if not under the TA. Ms. Hien proposed that ADB use the national executing agency model for the TA. Mr. Tang proposed that the TA should also consider assisting in the implementation of the NSDS, such as preparation of action plans, in addition to NSDS preparation. He also suggested holding local level pilot studies. He also suggested including sustainable development indicators, which are not the same as environment performance indicators to be developed under SEF II. Since NSDS formulation is a huge effort in PRC, he suggested focusing only on Yunnan Province, and only to formulate the Action Plan in accordance with PRC's SD strategy. Mr. Luo concurred with Mr. Tang's suggestion to limit the TA to Yunnan Province. Mr. Ieng suggested providing good concrete examples of SD activities, to foster greater ownership of SD activities by the countries. Dr. Monthip observed that the proposal's scope is broad and needs to be made more specific. She noted that the proposal's poverty reduction component is in line with Thailand's SD thrusts. She asked for more specifics on certain activities such as the types of courses under capacity building. Mr. Sinha explained the proposal's implementation strategy.

46. Dr. Monthip asked for the proposal's plan to link with other GMS working groups in propagating SD ideas. Mr. Rajendran said that the TA would be important for mainstreaming SD issues at the national level, which could be addressed in the proposed implementation structure of the TA. On the issue of focal point for SD in each country, as raised by Mr. Ieng, Mr. Rajendran replied that the TA would support the national SD process, which would help each country arrive at the proper choice of focal point. Mr. Shrestha noted the lack of ownership of the countries of the processes/ outcomes of international environment conferences, after the report deadlines have passed. Dr. Monthip proposed ways to inform other GMS working groups of the WGE's SD efforts. Mr. Tang suggested that given their cross-cutting nature, SD activities be endorsed by the GMS Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) after being discussed in detail at the WGE. Mr. Rajendran said the proposal responds to the need to work closely and continuously with countries to enhance the in-country SD process and mainstreaming this into the development process. Mr. Ieng proposed that the TA provide for WGE's membership in the NCSD. Mr. Luo recognized the funding limitations of the TA and asked for prospects for additional funding in the future. Mr. Rajendran said that much depends on the details of the TA that would be worked out. Mr. Thuren said SIDA would discuss a proposal covering the GMS SD strategy, but is broader in geographic scope. He observed that the TA proposal does not cover support for local SD processes but only national/ subregional processes. Mr. Luo invited the WGE to provide additional feedback to the proponent.

Session VI- Broadening Participation of Development Partners in the WGE (Chair: Mrs. Keobang A Keola, Deputy Director of Cabinet, STEA, Lao PDR)

47. Mr. Rajendran recalled the developments that took place in the GMS Ministerial Meeting in Dali. He noted the Mekong Department's efforts to bring new donor partners in the GMS Program. He said the Development Partners Meeting (DPM) in Dali was meant to provide opportunity for donor agencies to interact more closely with each other and with the GMS representatives. He said the DPM observed the strong ownership and commitment to regional cooperation of the GMS members. He recalled the three themes of "connectivity, competitiveness and community" emphasized in Dali and what these involve in terms of GMS Program activities. He reiterated the observations of ADB VP Jin Liqun, that the main reason for the success of the GMS Program is the strong sense of ownership by the GMS members, with ADB playing largely a catalytic role. The question he said is how to get other donors on board in the GMS Program. A major approach was to get donors actively involved in the GMS working groups, considering the various donors' regional programs and priority areas. He added that the WGE meeting would provide a good opportunity to discuss the Dali outcome, although the WGE has been ahead in terms of actively involving development partners in the past. He invited participants to share their views on this issue.

48. **SIDA.** Mr. Thuren explained SIDA's development assistance to the GMS, focusing on bilateral support for Lao PDR, Viet Nam and PRC. He said regional support exists but to a lesser extent. He explained SIDA's "Asia Strategy" of which the environment was one of the identified sectors. He noted SIDA management's directive to expand ties with multilateral development agencies like ADB. He said he came from the Dali meeting very impressed with the strong ownership by GMS countries of the GMS Program. He hoped that specific areas of support by SIDA in the GMS would become clearer in the coming year. Among prospective areas he mentioned are infrastructure and upstream-downstream cooperation.

49. **World Bank.** Ms. Manida explained the WB's lending and non-lending assistance. She reiterated WB's strict requirements for environmental impact assessment (EIA) which is one possible area for GMS assistance under WB's lending program. Presently WB operates mostly bilateral programs but is exploring regional programs in the future. She said the WB would welcome suggestions on the possible approaches for the WB's regional program.

50. **Comments.** Dr. Monthip asked how SIDA could accelerate the process of developing its regional program. She cited WB's programs and asked for WB support for poverty reduction. She also asked for comments on the proposal for education for sustainable development. Dr. Thuren noted the possible instrument for the SIDA-financed project in Thailand. He said development of SIDA's GMS regional program would have to undergo the prescribed process. Ms. Keobang A thanked SIDA for its substantial assistance to Lao PDR. Mr. Luo expressed PRCs interest in developing mechanisms for upstream-downstream cooperation.

51. **UNEP.** Mr. Shrestha reiterated UNEP's full support for regional cooperation in environment under the GMS Program. He suggested that future WGE meetings expand invitations to other development partners.

52. **MRC.** Mr. Meng explained MRC's regional programs and upcoming programs dealing with emerging issues such as transboundary water and flood control. He proposed strengthening dialogues with PRC and Myanmar, which are not MRC members. On capacity

building, he explained MRC's change in strategy, which now involves an expanded exchange program. He thanked SIDA for its support for MRC.

53. **Comments.** Dr. Monthip asked if SIDA could support a regional training program to share its success stories from bilateral programs in the GMS. She cited the successful Sustainable Cities program, which had extensive participation of local governments. Ms. Manida asked which agency, if not the WGE, is responsible for ensuring that negative environmental impacts do not arise from GMS projects. Mr. Rajendran explained that on project basis, EIA are undertaken and guidelines are fully adhered to in such cases. Ms. Manida however asked the practice for projects not financed by ADB. Mr. Rajendran replied that capacity building under the GMS Program will build GMS capacities for improving their EIA processes. Ms. Hien noted Viet Nam's efforts consistent with the theme (three Cs) of the Dali meeting and cited Viet Nam's partnership with MRC. Ms. Hien thanked donors for their strong support on environment protection efforts for Viet Nam for the past years, especially SIDA, UNDP. She welcomed donors' further supports on environment protection in the future on the aspect of building capacity for GMS countries at the national level, local level and grassroot level to push up the implementation of environment protection efforts.

54. It was decided that a workshop would be held in the PRC to understand the process of preparing the outline for SD strategy in China.

Session VII- The GMS Environment Sector Road Map: Initiatives for Environmental Cooperation in the GMS (Chair: Daw Yin Yin Lay, Joint Secretary, NCEA, Myanmar)

55. Mr. Masami Tsuji, ADB, presented the GMS Environment Sector Road Map which plots the target achievements for the sector for the next 5, 10 and 15 years, given the current status and status for the past 5 years. He presented the expected sector outcomes for the following areas: infrastructure (road, power), land management, water resource management, forest management, coastal zone management, and air quality. For knowledge management issues, he also showed the expected outcomes in policy, technology, information network, and governance. Mr. Tsuji then presented the indicative sector outputs for each of the aforementioned seven sectors/ areas (infrastructure, urban development, etc.) as well as knowledge management issues (policy, technology, etc.). He enumerated the issues, developments and constraints for each of the sectors/ areas listed. For example, for urban development, among the items he noted (out of six) are as follows: strengthen local administration through devolution of functions; improve housing and shelter stocks; enact and improve legislation and regulatory standards; and develop communication instruments. He said the items he described in the tables contain footnotes indicating the source document. He said the WGE members' inputs to enhance the road map would be appreciated. He reiterated that since the targets/ information in the road map have been earlier agreed to by GMS countries, he hopes the comments would provide additional information instead of corrections.

56. **Comments.** Mr. Rajendran said the road map is being constructed by ADB as part of preparations for the GMS RCSP. He explained the importance of the road map in relation to donors' request for better management of project outcomes. He said the road map lists out the specific sectors believed to have direct impact on the environment. He said the road map includes inputs from the SEF II team and requested the WGE to review the road map for additional inputs. Ms. Keobang A suggested adding rural development in the road map column. Dr. Monthip proposed a workshop dedicated to developing the road map. Mr. Thuren agreed that the road map is a valuable document and asked about the template or plan to develop the road map further. He agreed that there is need for more in-country consultations to agree on

certain entries in the road map. Dr. Monthip also asked for copies of other sector road maps. Mr. Tsuji replied that the entries in the draft road map could be revised and invited further reviews to improve this. As for other sector road maps, these, he said, are still being developed. Mr. Rajendran said that the road and power sectors enjoyed the benefit of master plans that guided directions in which regional cooperation in these sectors proceeded. The environment sector, he said did not benefit from such a master plan, and is still coming to grip with emerging issues, so a road map would be useful for the sector. He requested the WGE members to provide as much information possible for each of the items in the road map, and ADB would try to incorporate all these information in a revised road map. Mr. Meng suggested also providing information on joint environment activities by various donors. Mr. Chanrithy said a national workshop could also consider other sector road maps, where other stakeholders could participate. Mr. Rajendran cited the difficulties in organizing this given the funding constraints, but suggested that in-country, inter-ministry data collection could accomplish the work.

Session VIII- Conclusion: Strategic Environmental Response to the GMS Program for 2003-2005 (Chair: Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu Hien, Expert, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Viet Nam)

Development Matrix/ Ideas for 2nd GMS Summit

57. Mr. Rajendran introduced the GMS Development Matrix and the matrix on the “Strategic Environment Framework” flagship program. The SEF matrix is linked to the environment sector road map and covers a range of programs done by various agencies for the subregion. He said there are now efforts to restructure the matrix to make it more user friendly, more updated and more monitorable. He said ADB is developing guidelines for restructuring the matrix to be presented to the SOM in mid-December in Manila. He said he would like to flag these developments to the WGE members who are expected to review/ update the SEF matrix after its restructuring. He said that the SEF is much more responsive to earlier WGE members’ observations on programs with significant impacts on the environment. Ms. Hien requested WGE members’ support for enhancing the matrix.

58. Mr. Rajendran additionally asked the WGE for ideas on initiatives that could be presented to the GMS Leaders for the second Summit in 2005. Dr. Monthip agreed it is a good idea to start preparations for the next GMS Summit. She suggested showing a video of success stories on environment. She also suggested a program on education/ training for SD (CDM, biodiversity, etc.). Mr. Meng asked whether GMS working groups should be linked by joint meetings. Ms. Hien said horizontal communication would be useful. Mr. Rajendran said an earlier joint session of the WGE and Tourism Working Group was found to be less successful. However, this does not preclude future joint sessions with other working groups. Mr. Chanrithy suggested a mechanism to link the WGE with the other projects, to inform WGE members of status of said projects. Mr. Rajendran said that the reformulated Development Matrix could be circulated to various WGs to inform the latter of developments in various sectors and projects.

59. Mr. Rajendran recalled that a video presentation on the GMS Environment Atlas was planned for the First GMS Summit, but this did not push through due to time constraints. He said the Atlas is now in the final stage of preparation, and it highlights the key environmental challenges in the GMS. Dr. Monthip suggested an exhibit of materials/ publications from various working groups. She suggested that GMS working groups issue a newsletter to inform other WGs of their initiatives/ activities. She briefed on the lunch exchange she had with the local press, and stressed the importance of dissemination of information on WGE activities. Mr. Rajendran briefed on the numerous press initiatives to inform about the GMS Program,

including the special GMS supplement in the US-based Foreign Policy magazine. He agreed on the importance of keeping track of various initiatives of WGs and other partners. Mr. Luo noted the wealth of information made available in the web, but noted that communication is still deficient; therefore newsletters would still be useful.

60. Ms. Hien announced that Viet Nam agreed to host the WGE-10 meeting, but will inform the WGE members later of the exact venue.

Closing Remarks

61. Mr. Rajendran thanked Ms. Hien for the invitation to the WGE-10 meeting. He said the country reports were found to be useful, and said ways would be explored to improve their format. He was pleased with the comments received on the proposed TA on capacity building and said the work to refine the proposal will commence shortly. He noted that the issue of providing environmental education has been raised by WGE members, and said this is indeed an important matter to consider. He cited the usefulness of the session on the GMS environment work of development partners, and expressed appreciation for the presence of UNEP, MRC, SIDA and WB and the Universities Partnership for Transboundary Water. He added that the road map would be enhanced with inputs from the WGE members. He noted the importance of the development matrix and called on the WGE members to provide accurate information to enhance its usage. He enjoined the WGE members to think about how to package the gains in the GMS environment sector, which could be produced in time for the Second GMS Summit of Leaders in 2005. He cited that China's experience in developing the outline of SD and announced that PRC will host a workshop on how this outline is prepared. Finally, he thanked Dr. Monthip and DEQP for putting the meeting together, UNEP for the technical support, his ADB colleagues for helping organize the meeting, and Ding Ding Tang for assisting as resource person. He looked forward to the next meeting and round of discussions of the WGE.

62. Dr. Monthip expressed her appreciation to the participants for coming all the way to Phuket. She noted the success of the two-day WGE meeting, and hoped that the fruitful discussions would move the group towards action. She firmly believed that the GMS would go the right direction, the SD way. She looked forward to seeing the participants again and wished everyone a safe journey home.