

Subregional Working Group on Environment: Terms of Reference

Initiation

The Subregional Working Group on Environment (WGE) was established under the GMS Economic Cooperation to serve as an advisory body on subregional issues in the environment and natural resources management sector. The WGE reports to the Ministerial Conference and to the respective governments.

Rationale

The establishment of the WGE responds to the need for a forum that will promote and facilitate cooperation in the environment and natural resource management sector among the GMS countries. The WGE facilitates the implementation of priority subregional environmental projects, and ensures that environmental issues are properly addressed in subregional projects in other sectors, with special emphasis on large infrastructure projects being developed in the transportation and energy sectors. It also addresses the issues regarding national environmental legislation and regulations within the subregion.

Main Objectives

The WGE has the following objectives:

- Provide a vehicle for dissemination and exchange of information on environmental matters among regional governments, and international organizations;
- Provide a venue for addressing software issues, including the coordination of national environmental policies that concern common subregional issues, the formulation of regional environmental standards, cooperation in controlling illegal trade in timber and in endangered species, etc.;
- Provide a venue for addressing environmental issues associated with subregional development projects in other sectors, and especially those associated with large infrastructure projects in the transport and energy sectors;
- Provide policy advice and guidance on subregional environmental programs funded by ADB, UNDP, UNEP, ESCAP, MRC and other institutions;
- Coordinate financing arrangements for subregional projects by the governments concerned, by donors, and by the private sector; and
- Facilitate cooperative training projects and other human resource development initiatives in the environment and natural resources management sector.

Membership

Each GMS country is represented by two persons in the WGE core group. One representative is a senior official from the environmental agency, and the other representative is a senior official from either the environmental agency also or from a government agency in the natural resource management sector.

Chairperson and Venue

The position of Chairperson rotates among the participating countries, and is linked to the venue of the next WGE meeting. The Chairperson, who is selected among the members of the core group, provides the necessary logistical support for WGE activities.

Frequency of WGE Meetings

The WGE meets twice a year for the first two years, or more frequently depending on its work program. Unlike other subregional forums and working groups, WGE's area of responsibility extends beyond its own projects to include environmental issues raised by projects and activities in other sectors.

WGE Meetings Held

- Ninth Meeting, 1-2 December 2003, Phuket, Thailand
- Eighth Meeting, 3-4 April 2002, Yangon, Myanmar [PDF]
- Seventh Meeting, 29-31 August 2001, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR
- Sixth Meeting, 10 January 2000, ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines
- Fifth Meeting, 11-12 May 1999, Kunming, Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China
- Fourth Meeting, 5-6 March 1998, Hanoi, Viet Nam
- Third Meeting, 11-13 March 1997, Siem Reap Province, Cambodia
- Second Meeting, 30 July - 1 August 1996, Bangkok, Thailand
- Commencement Workshop, 4 October 1995, ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines