



### THIRD GMS SUMMIT SPECIAL

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- Component Events
  - Business and Investment Dialogue
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  - GMS Exhibit

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- May 2008: Tourism
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This *GMS E-News* is a quarterly publication to provide readers with an update on activities and major developments in pursuit of accelerated development of the countries sharing the Mekong River.

## GMS LEADERS MEET IN VIENTIANE; AGREE ON STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE GMS PROGRAM (Vientiane, Lao PDR, 31 March 2008)



The six GMS Leaders- Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Lao Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh, Myanmar Prime Minister Thein Sein, Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej, and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung met in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 31 March 2008, to discuss ways to deepen economic cooperation for their countries' shared prosperity. In his Keynote Address at the

Opening Ceremony, the Summit Chair, Lao Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh lauded the tangible results from the GMS program and outlined his thoughts on moving forward for the next five and ten years of GMS cooperation. With the Summit theme of "Enhancing Competitiveness through Greater Connectivity", the Leaders discussed, during their Closed-Door Meeting, how the improvements in subregional connectivity could help provide greater economic opportunities that would eventually lead to improved competitiveness and productivity of the peoples of the GMS. ADB President Haruhiko Kuroda, who joined the Leaders during the Closed-Door Meeting, reported on the progress of and challenges ahead for the GMS Program.

At the conclusion of the Summit, the GMS Leaders signed the [Joint Summit Declaration \(JSD\)](#), and endorsed the [Vientiane Plan of Action for GMS Development \(POA\) 2008-2012](#), which covers the nine sectors of GMS cooperation. In addition to the Opening Ceremony and Closed-Door Meeting, the Third GMS Summit included the following component events: Business and Investment Dialogue; GMS Youth Forum; Ceremonies for Inauguration of Route 3 in the North-South Economic Corridor, and Phase I of the Information Superhighway Network; and signing of MOUs on power trade and economic corridor development. The GMS Exhibit, put up at the Summit venue, showcased GMS achievements in enhancing connectivity, competitiveness, and a sense of community (see related articles below).



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- Joint Summit Declaration and the Vientiane Plan of Action
- Inaugural and Signing Ceremonies

## THE JOINT SUMMIT DECLARATION (JSD) AND VIENTIANE PLAN OF ACTION (POA) FOR GMS DEVELOPMENT: The New Way Forward for Deeper GMS Cooperation

The JSD contains the GMS Leaders' broad directives for future GMS cooperation, which stressed that while subregional infrastructure development remained a priority, there will be increasing emphasis on enhancing economic competitiveness and accelerating social development progress through improved connectivity. This is consistent with the recommendations of the midterm review of the 10-Year GMS Strategic Framework. The JSD also contains key initiatives in each of the nine sectors, which were taken from the Vientiane POA.

The Vientiane POA contains specific programs and projects under each GMS sector of cooperation, together with the indicative timeframes, countries involved, estimated costs, financing gaps and other useful information.

### INAUGURAL AND SIGNING CEREMONIES WITNESSED BY THE GMS LEADERS AND ADB PRESIDENT: Celebrating Milestones in GMS Connectivity (31 March 2008)

The inaugural and signing ceremonies witnessed by the GMS Leaders and ADB President, which took place after their Closed-Door Meeting on 31 March 2008, marked key milestones in pursuit of improved GMS connectivity. The first was the inauguration of Route 3 along the GMS North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC). This included the showing of a short video of scenes along the route, followed by ribbon cutting by the GMS Leaders and ADB President on stage. This road, part of the Kunming-Bangkok component of the NSEC was upgraded with financial assistance from the Governments of PRC and Thailand, and ADB.



This was followed by the completion ceremony of Phase I of the GMS Information Superhighway (IS) Project, which comprises the hardware component of the broadband platform for voice, data, and internet services linking the GMS countries. A video highlighting the construction of the IS project was shown, followed by a ceremony during which GMS Leaders and ADB President touched a globe to illuminate the IS routes on a large map of the GMS.

The GMS Leaders and ADB President also witnessed the signing of two memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that will have important implications in translating enhanced connectivity into improved productivity and competitiveness of the subregion. The first is the MOU on the Road Map for Implementing Cross-Border Power Trading, which prescribes the key activities and timelines to realize the initial stages of power trading. The second is the MOU Toward the Sustainable and Balanced Development of the GMS North-South Economic Corridor (NSEC) and Enhanced Organizational Effectiveness for Developing Economic Corridors. This MOU aims to promote the transformation of the NSEC into a full-fledged economic corridor, as well as to strengthen the institutional arrangements for the development of GMS economic corridors.



The ceremonies culminated with the signing by the GMS Leaders of their Joint Summit Declaration.

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- Business and Investment Dialogue
- GMS Youth Forum

**BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT DIALOGUE (BID): Engaging the Private Sector in Specific GMS Activities (30 March 2008)**

The BID was attended by representatives of the GMS business community and international corporations that have business operations in the GMS. The BID came up with specific recommendations on the following areas: (i) challenges to intra-GMS trade and improvements in the GMS investment climate; (ii) possible roles for the private sector in the implementation of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA); and (iii) enhancing the involvement of GMS small and medium-sized enterprises in the export market.



These recommendations were later presented at a meeting between GMS Leaders and ADB President, and BID participants. They included: (i) promoting trade logistics; (ii) reviewing investment incentives regime across the GMS and streamlining administrative procedures for doing business in the GMS; (iii) tapping the GMS Business Forum to help step up the implementation of the CBTA Transit System; and (iv)

establishing a pre-shipment export finance guarantee scheme to help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to effectively participate in the export market and global value chains.

**GMS YOUTH FORUM: Instilling a Strong Sense of GMS Community and Identity Among Future GMS Movers (30 March 2008)**

The first-ever GMS Youth Forum held on 30 March 2008, marked the culmination of a series of activities that included national and regional youth consultations, and separate caravans that traveled along three GMS economic corridors and ended in Vientiane in time for the Summit. A group of 36 young people representing a wide cross-section of the GMS youth population experienced firsthand the GMS Program and its 3 Cs strategic pillars of increased connectivity,



improved competitiveness, and enhanced sense of community. The GMS Youth Message embodying the concerns and opportunities identified by the youth was presented to the GMS Leaders and ADB President at their meeting with the youth representatives. The My Mekong coffee table book, featuring photographs taken by GMS teenagers in five different locations in the subregion, was launched at the Youth Forum.



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- GMS Exhibit

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of Tourism Working Group
- 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Environment

**THE GMS EXHIBIT: Showcasing the GMS Program's Positive Development Outcomes (Inauguration/ Opening of the Exhibit (30 March 2008))**

The GMS Exhibit was inaugurated on 30 March 2008 by Madame Khempheng Pholsena, GMS Minister for Lao PDR, and Mr. C. Lawrence Greenwood Jr., ADB Vice President for Operations Group 2. The Exhibit included: (i) My Mekong Youth Forum Exhibit, which featured photographs from the coffee table book; (ii) My World, My Home Exhibit, which featured the winning and selected pieces of the Core Environment Program-sponsored children's artworks



competition; and (iii) GMS Ecotourism Exhibit, which displayed how ecotourism is providing sustainable livelihoods to local people and contributing to poverty alleviation and natural and cultural heritage conservation in the GMS. A separate GMS History Exhibit and an interactive GMS connectivity map showcased the impressive gains made by the GMS Program since its establishment in 1992.

**21<sup>st</sup> MEETING OF THE TOURISM WORKING GROUP (TWG-21) (Cambodia, 20-21 May 2008)**

The TWG-21 meeting will follow-through on directives of the Third GMS Summit held in Vientiane in March 2008 pertaining to the tourism sector. Status of ongoing projects and plans for new initiatives to further strengthen the operations of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office and implement key priority tourism development and tourism marketing projects under the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy and Action Plan will be discussed.



**14<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT (WGE AM 14) (Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, 5-6 June 2008)**



WGE AM 14 will discuss the 2008-2011 Core Environment Program (CEP)/ Biodiversity Conservation Corridor Initiative (BCI) program priorities and plan of operations, including the 2008 CEP/BCI budget. The WGE technical session will take up the WGE/Environment Operations Center (EOC) institutional and operational strengthening, and climate change priorities and adaptation approaches.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Fifth Planning Working Group and Sixth Focal Group Meeting

## GMS PROJECT LINKS

- [GMS Cross-Border Transport Agreement](#)
- [GMS - Phnom Penh Plan for Development Management](#)
- [GMS Core Environment Program](#)
- [GMS Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative](#)
- [GMS Energy Strategy Study](#)
- [Working Group on Agriculture](#)

### FIFTH PLANNING WORKING GROUP (PWG-5) AND SIXTH FOCAL GROUP (FG-6) MEETINGS OF THE REGIONAL POWER TRADE COORDINATION COMMITTEE (RPTCC) (Lao PDR, June 2008)

The meetings will take stock of the progress of priority RPTCC studies and activities, particularly on the setting up of the power sector database and website, and the development of the Regional Power Master Plan. Also to be discussed are the following: implementation of priority projects in the Master Plan; updates on each country's power development program; and progress of milestones set in the MOU on the Road Map for Implementing Cross-Border Power Trading, signed at the Third GMS Summit.

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