23rd Ministerial Conference of the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program

Heads of GMS country delegations participate in the 23rd GMS Ministerial
The Royal Government of Cambodia and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized the 23rd GMS Ministerial Conference on 17-18 November 2019 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with the theme “Greater Integration, Inclusivity and Sustainability in the GMS.” The meeting brought together GMS Ministers and Senior Officials of the six GMS countries—Cambodia, the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam—representatives from ADB, development partners and the private sector, to lay the groundwork for the 7th GMS Summit set in 2021.

The GMS Ministerial Conference (MC-23) took place on 18 November. The Senior Officials' Meeting and Development Partners’ Meeting were held on 17 November in preparation for the MC-23 plenary.

**Senior Officials’ Meeting**

The Senior Officials' Meeting reviewed key elements of the draft GMS-2030, the proposed new GMS long term strategic framework that will guide GMS cooperation toward shared goals for the next decade, ahead of the MC-23. This draft GMS-2030 is an outcome of a consultative process, and builds on the Ha Noi Action Plan (HAP) 2018-2022 adopted at the 6th GMS Summit held in Hanoi in March 2018.

The Senior Officials Meeting finalized preparations for the GMS Ministerial Retreat, a forum for more interactive and substantive exchange of ideas among GMS Ministers, and the MC-23.

**Development Partners Meeting**
The Development Partners Meeting (DPM), a traditional side event of the GMS Ministerial Conference, explored possible areas for cooperation in the GMS region and its development partners. It was attended by participants from the 6 GMS countries and 18 bilateral, multilateral, and academic development partner organizations and members of the GMS Business Council.

The DPM recognized the role development partners have played in pursuing the goals and objectives of the GMS Program, as guided by the current strategic framework and HAP.

Development partners welcomed the proposed draft GMS-2030. They acknowledged consistency of the proposed GMS-2030’s principles with their own mandates and priority programs in the subregion, expressed general support for the proposed operational and sectoral priorities, and welcomed the proposed strengthened institutional infrastructure that seeks deeper involvement of development partners, think tanks, and the private sector.

Development partners noted the Regional Investment Framework (RIF) projects’ funding status and requirements and gaps that remain to be filled. They suggested approaches by which they could further contribute to the implementation of RIF.

The meeting reaffirmed the continuing commitment of GMS countries and development partners to work together to achieve the goals of the GMS Program. It concluded with the reinforcement of initiatives to address shared interests and concerns.

23rd GMS Ministerial Conference

The 23rd GMS Ministerial Conference highlighted substantial achievements of the GMS program since the 6th GMS Summit. In the Joint Statement, the Ministers underscored key developments under sectors of focus. These include:

- In transport, work to further enhance the regional connectivity infrastructure. The GMS RIF 2022 incorporates multimodal transport projects with a total estimated value of over $78 billion,
- In trade and transport facilitation, the Early Harvest Implementation of the GMS Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement is helping improve border procedures,
- In energy, GMS countries continue to accelerate regional power trade through
the Regional Power Trade Coordination Committee,

- In agriculture, the GMS Strategy for Promoting Safe and Environment-Friendly Agro-Based Value Chains is helping strengthen food security, increasing market access for small producers, and ensuring food safety,
- In environment, the Core Environment Program Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2018-2022 pledged to address climate change and leveraging green growth opportunities, and
- In tourism, continuing progress of GMS tourism, with international tourist arrivals in 2018 reaching 78.8 million, generating tourism receipts valued at $95 billion and 6.5 million jobs. GMS Ministers pledged to encourage more efforts on travel facilitation and cross-border collaboration.

The meeting plenary also officially launched the **GMS Health Cooperation Strategy 2019-2023**. The five-year Strategy provides a framework to guide GMS countries in collectively tackling health issues impacting the subregion. Read the news.

GMS Ministers reviewed the preliminary results of a research program that aims to support the implementation of the proposed GMS 2030 through policy recommendations. The Ministers tasked Senior Officials to work on incorporating further refinements in the draft GMS 2030, for possible presentation and endorsement at 7th GMS Summit.

They Ministers lauded the draft of the proposed GMS Strategy 2030 for reflecting the GMS vision, aspirations, and goals. Through the strategy, GMS Ministers expressed hope for the Program’s continued relevance, resilience, and inclusive benefits to the countries and peoples of the subregion.

The Ministers also acknowledged progress of implementation of the GMS RIF 2022. **GMS Ministers endorsed the GMS Regional Investment Framework 2022: Second Progress Report and Update**. This update revises the RIF 2022 pipeline to new total of 255 investment and technical assistance projects requiring a total of $92.7 billion in financing.

**Related**

- Joint Ministerial Statement.
- 23rd GMS Ministerial Conference event page.

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