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MEKONG FORUM 2023



Driving Transformative Change in the GMS

Thursday July 27, 2023

Kunming Kai Wah Plaza Hotel, Kunming City, Yunnan Province, P. R. China





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The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), comprising Cambodia, P. R. China (Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region), Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, has emerged as a recognized fast-growing economic block. It is driving and sustaining socioeconomic progress throughout the region while fostering connections with development partners in ASEAN, Asia, and the rest of the world.

However, the subregion has also been confronted with emerging challenges, including transboundary environmental issues, natural disasters, and social and political tensions. Consequently, poverty and hunger have surged, exposing unforeseen vulnerabilities across various sectors. Unfortunately, the poorest and most vulnerable populations have borne the brunt of these effects.

As the GMS continues to work towards achieving meaningful change, it is crucial to reaffirm its roles and recalibrate its mechanisms in pushing for a robust regional development agenda while supporting the priorities of member countries. With its focus on regional integration, promoting sustainable growth, and addressing shared challenges, the GMS has gained the support of critical actors and partners in international development.

In doing so, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) continue to serve as the compass for development, mobilizing concerted global efforts even in dire circumstances. Likewise, to help global communities chart a higher and more sustainable growth trajectory, P.R. China launched the Global Development Initiative (GDI) in 2021 to foster stronger, greener, and healthier global development. The SDGs and the GDI remain all the more relevant in advancing recovery amidst an uncertain economic, political, and social future.

As an intergovernmental organization founded and owned by the GMS countries, Mekong Institute (MI) has been collaborating with governments, development partners, and stakeholders to build and enhance human resource capacities and facilitate policy implementation across regional cooperation frameworks. MI's focus areas include food and agriculture, trade, logistics, energy, environment, innovation, and social inclusion.

MI annually holds its flagship event, the Mekong Forum, to gather and engage stakeholders. This year, the Mekong Forum has as its theme "Driving Transformative Change in the GMS." The forum will shine a spotlight on the GMS, showcasing its transformative potential in driving sustainable economic growth and reclaiming its position as a growth center.

Objectives

The Mekong Forum 2023 aims to contribute to the GMS's recovery, growth, and sustainable development while advancing the shared vision of the SDGs and the GDI. To achieve this, the forum will pursue the following specific objectives:

1 Reaffirm the GMS's Purpose through the Lens of Stakeholders

The event aims to delve into how key stakeholders and development partners perceive the GMS to reaffirm its roles and comprehensively define the transformative change it needs moving forward.

2 Foster Regional Cooperation

The forum aims to promote regional cooperation among the GMS countries by facilitating dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. It seeks to strengthen wider partnerships and encourage collective action to address the challenges and opportunities faced by the subregion.

3 Share Best Practices and Tools

The forum will serve as a platform to showcase best practices, practical tools, and successful initiatives that have proven effective in fostering recovery and sustainable development in the GMS. It aims to disseminate knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned to inspire and guide policymakers, stakeholders, and practitioners in their efforts.

4 Explore Opportunities for Accelerating Recovery

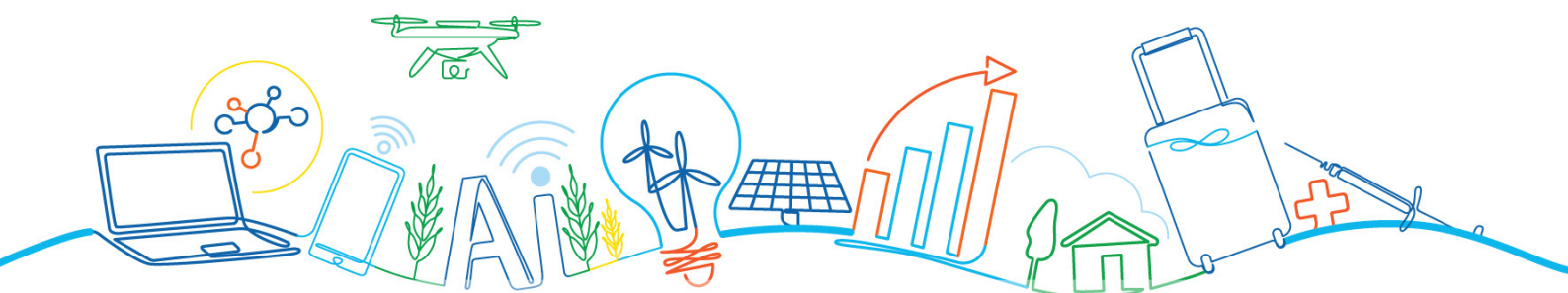
The forum will explore opportunities for recovering lost progress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and global supply chain shocks. It will focus on identifying areas of growth and development, leveraging innovation, and harnessing the potential of sectors such as agriculture, trade, logistics, energy, environment, and social inclusion.

5 Facilitate Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

The forum will provide a safe space for diverse stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and collaboration. It aims to foster inclusive decision-making processes and partnerships that lead to actionable insights and impactful solutions.

6 Strengthen Capacities and Policy Implementation

The forum will seek to enhance the capacities of policymakers, institutions, and individuals in the GMS countries. It will focus on facilitating the implementation of policies, initiatives, and regional cooperation frameworks in various sectors, aiming to ensure effective and sustainable outcomes.



Participants

The forum is expected to be attended by approximately 300 participants made up of representatives from the GMS countries, government officials, development practitioners, particularly those working at the regional (GMS/ASEAN) level, and intergovernmental, non-government/civil society, and non-profit organizations, businesses, as well as research and academic institutes.

Highlights

The following activities will serve as the highlight of the Mekong Forum 2023:

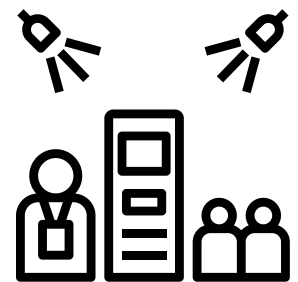
Plenary Session

The forum will commence in plenary with the official welcome and opening remarks followed by several keynote addresses from distinguished leaders and experts in the field of international and regional (GMS/ASEAN) development cooperation.



Exhibit

The forum will feature an exhibition of innovative projects, initiatives, and practical tools and solutions from various organizations.



Study Tour

An optional study tour will be organized to provide interested participants with invaluable insights into the latest innovations in the field, along with the opportunity to hear from industry experts firsthand.



Breakout Sessions

Parallel breakout sessions are interactive and focused workshops designed to explore specific topics related to the theme of the conference. The sessions aim to engage participants to contribute, collaborate, and develop top actionable recommendations that can drive positive change within the GMS. These actionable recommendations will be one of the main concrete outcomes of the forum, which can be revisited during the succeeding forum next year. There will be a total of three (3) sessions covering the following topics that align with MI's focus areas. *(See next page for more details about the breakout session)*



Breakout Sessions



A. Agricultural Productivity and Market Access

Session Title

Transforming the Agriculture Sector toward Increased Productivity, Sustainability, and Resilience

The agriculture sector is integral to the GMS's economy and provides food and livelihood to its citizens. With over 60% of the subregion's population relying on it, the sector has seen significant growth in recent years. However, there are challenges that hold back the sector's potential. These challenges include limited access to modern technologies, a lack of infrastructure, and numerous market constraints.

Modernizing agriculture offers a chance to boost productivity, sustainability, and resilience. By using modern technologies, investing in infrastructure, improving skills, and promoting sustainable practices, we can transform agriculture in the GMS, securing long-term economic growth and reducing poverty. In this session, experts, policymakers, researchers, and development partners from the GMS will come together to share knowledge and discuss innovative solutions and strategies for a sustainable and resilient food system, in support of the region's efforts to accelerate its recovery post-pandemic.



B. Trade and Logistics

Session Title

Unlocking Opportunities: Reshaping Logistics and Investment through Emerging Trends and Green Practices

Strong logistics networks and infrastructure connect different parts of the Lancang-Mekong (LM), facilitating the flow of goods, services, and people. This connectivity promotes regional cooperation, trade, and investment, driving economic opportunities and development.

The expansion of logistics networks is creating an unprecedented opportunity for LM countries to forge deeper ties within the region, thus promoting increased investment and fostering export possibilities that will balance growth throughout the LM. In this session, we will delve into the impact of logistics, particularly focusing on rail connectivity, a new and significant addition to the region's logistics infrastructure. We will analyze the policy implications and the needs of the private sector in relation to these evolving logistics networks. The discussion will center around identifying fresh opportunities for LM countries, infrastructure improvements, and the sustainability implications of these new linkages. In the LM region, logistics plays a vital role in complex cross-border trade relations that are key to maintaining the region's position in global value chains. The session will provide industry experts and policy makers with strategies to enhance logistics and income growth in the rapidly developing LM region.



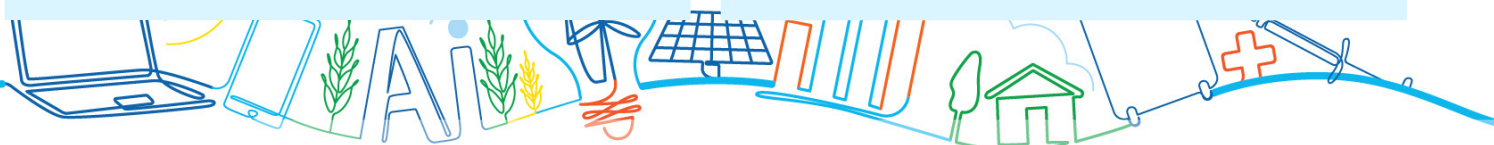
C. Clean Energy and Climate Resilience

Session Title

Transformative Pathways towards Low Carbon Development in the Energy Sector

The SDGs and the Paris Agreement have a shared objective to create a sustainable world for everyone. One of the key targets is SDG 7, which focuses on providing clean and affordable energy. Access to clean and affordable energy sources helps reduce reliance on fossil fuels, mitigates climate change impact, and promotes environmental conservation by minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. However, transitioning to clean energy is a complex process that requires significant upfront investments in infrastructure, technologies, and institutional capacities. Additionally, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the impacts of COVID-19 have led to increased energy prices. As the world approaches the midpoint of the 2030 agenda, there is a growing need to finance the energy transition, with a particular focus on developing economies.

The current climate finance landscape offers opportunities to address the inadequate level of investment in the energy sector. However, accessing climate finance can be complicated. In this session, we will discuss how the GDI can help Lancang-Mekong countries improve their ability to access climate finance for the energy sector. We will also emphasize the importance of regional partnerships in achieving climate commitments. Each country's plans for energy transition pathways and the actions needed to reach its goals will be shared and discussed.



Organized by

With the support of the People's Government of P. R. China, the Mekong Forum 2023 will be held in person at Kunming Kai Wah Plaza Hotel, Kunming City and is co-hosted by the People's Government of Yunnan Province and MI.

Forum Format

The format is onsite with the plenary session to be livestreamed on [MI's Facebook page](#).

Language

The main conference language is English with simultaneous translation to Chinese.

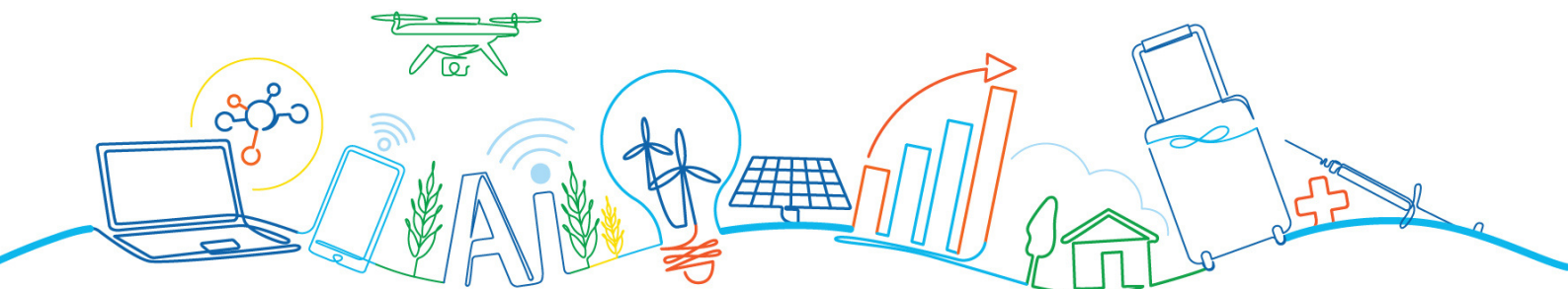
Event Registration

Participants can directly register for the event online and get the latest update at: <https://dev.mekonginstitute.org/mekong-forum-2023-event-registration/>



For more information, contact:

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TIME (UTC+8)	ACTIVITY
08:30 – 09:00	Registration at Grand Ballroom 1st Floor
09:00 – 09:05	Greetings and Welcome Ms. Hao Wen, Senior Program Coordinator, MI and Emcee
09:05 – 09:15	Introductory Remarks Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI
PLENARY SESSION: OPENING AND KEYNOTE ADDRESSES	
09:15 – 09:35	Welcome and Opening Address Mr. Chen Rongjie, Deputy Director General, Foreign Affairs Office of the People's Government of Yunnan Province
09:35 – 10:20	Keynote Address I: "Revisiting GMS Cooperation" Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of MI Steering Committee
10:20 – 10:50	Keynote Address II: "Deepening the ASEAN Community Building: The Emerging Role and Contribution of the GMS through the ASEAN Lens" H. E. Mr. Satvinder Singh, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Secretariat
10:50 – 11:00	Group Photo
11:00 – 11:20	Coffee/ Tea Break and Networking
11:20 – 12:00	Overview of Thematic Breakout Session, Cross-cutting Issue and Study Tour <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representatives from the Breakout Sessions• Prof. Dr. Ding Wenli, President of Kunming University
12:00 – 12:05	Announcement by Emcee
12:05 – 13:30	Lunch on the 3rd Floor



BREAKOUT SESSION: THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

	A. Agricultural Productivity and Market Access	B. Trade and Logistics	C. Clean Energy and Climate Resilience
	<i>Session Title</i>		
	Transforming the Agriculture Sector toward Increased Productivity, Sustainability, and Resilience	Unlocking Opportunities: Reshaping Logistics and Investment through Emerging Trends and Green Practices	Transformative Pathways towards Low Carbon Development in the Energy Sector
	Conference Hall A, 2nd Floor	Conferene Hall C, 2nd Floor	Room 2, 6th floor
	<i>Speakers</i>		
13:30 – 15:00	<p>Dr. Hung Pham Founder and Consultant Indochina Research and Consulting, Viet Nam</p> <p>Ms. Pouchamarn Wongsanga Project Director Agriculture and Food, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH</p> <p>Mr. Souvanthong Namvong Director for the Production Groups Promotion, Department of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives (DAEC), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)</p>	<p>Mr. Li Yongming Deputy Director Division of Logistics Industry Development, Department of Commerce of Yunnan Province, P. R. China</p> <p>Ms. Fei Yunhan Program Officer ASEAN Trade Division Department of Commerce of Yunnan Province, P. R. China</p> <p>H. E. Mr. Chhieng Pich Director General General Department of Logistics, Ministry of Public Works and Transport Kingdom of Cambodia</p> <p>Dr. Watcharas Leelawath Honorary Advisor Bolliger & Company Thailand</p> <p>Mrs. Hafida Fahmiasari Logistics Expert STC International</p> <p>Dr. Julian Latimer Clarke Program Specialist Trade and Investment Facilitation Department, MI</p>	<p>Mr. Ke Yousheng Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of China to UNESCAP</p> <p>Mr. Xu Yuxiao General Manager Strategy and Development Department, China Southern Power Grid Yunnan International Co., Ltd.</p> <p>Dr. Taidong Zhou Vice President, Center for International Knowledge on Development (CIKD)</p> <p>Dr. Salil K Sen Sustainability Reporting Consultant, Multilateral Development Institutions and Energy Research Institutes</p>
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee/Tea break		
15:30 – 17:00	Session A (continuation)	Session B (continuation)	Session C (continuation)
18:30 – 20:30	<p>Mekong Forum Reception Dinner and Networking H. E. Mr. Wang Hao, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province and Chairman of MI Council</p>		

Indicative Program

Mekong Forum Study Tour (Optional)

July 28 2023
Friday

TIME (UTC+8)	ACTIVITY
08:00	Meet at the lobby of Kungming Kai Wah Plaza Hotel
08:20	Leave the hotel for Kunming Railway Vocation and Technical College (KRVTTC)
09:00 – 11:15	Morning study tour to KRVTTC
11:45 – 13:00	Lunch
13:30 – 15:30	Afternoon study tour to Kunming International Flora Auction Trading Center (KIFA)
16:00	Drop-off at the hotel

