

PRESS RELEASE

MI and P. R. China drive transformative change in the GMS at Mekong Forum 2023 in Kunming City

Kunming City, Yunnan Province, the People's Republic of China (P. R. China), July 27, 2023 - In a historic first, Mekong Institute (MI), with support from P. R. China, brought together around 300 stakeholders from the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in Kunming City for the Mekong Forum 2023. Co-hosted by the People's Government of Yunnan Province, the annual event charted regional cooperation mechanisms aimed at bolstering the region's position as a growth center and fostering its emergence as an economic powerhouse.

"The GMS is navigating an ever-changing and dynamic landscape, withstanding the challenges posed by the rise in inflation, global supply chain shocks, high energy, and production costs, all compounded by the far-reaching effects of climate change. In light of these complexities, there is an urgent call for strengthened regional cooperation that can drive transformative growth in the region," said MI Executive Director, Suriyan Vichitlekarn, in his introductory remarks, setting the context for the forum.

Mr. Chen Rongjie, Deputy Director-General of the Yunnan Province Foreign Affairs Office, said that P. R. China was pleased to co-host the event. He reaffirmed the country's commitment to the GMS as he underscored the forum's role in catalyzing regional collaboration and collective advancement.

The forum featured keynote addresses from regional partners, offering actionable insights into charting a sustainable and prosperous path for the GMS. It revisited the GMS Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework (GMS-2023) and underscored the need for transformative changes to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the GMS-2030 vision.

Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of MI Steering Committee, shared a comprehensive overview of GMS cooperation's evolution from 1989 to the present, highlighting the significance of leveraging past achievements toward greater integration and prosperity.

H. E. Mr. Satvinder Singh, ASEAN Deputy Secretary-General for the ASEAN Economic Community, discussed the pivotal role and contributions of the GMS in regional economic growth and integration in Southeast Asia.

"GMS is the home and guardian of the Mekong River, which is the lifeline of Southeast Asia, and as such, is an indispensable part of ASEAN. The GMS is also strategically positioned as a bridge connecting ASEAN's continental and maritime regions, and is the center of many connectivity and economic initiatives," said Mr. Singh in his keynote address.

Aside from the plenary discussions, there were breakout sessions on three thematic areas critical to the GMS's development. A session on Agricultural Productivity and Market Access explored innovative agricultural practices and value chain development to boost productivity and income for farmers across the region.



Another session zeroed in on Trades and Logistics, providing participants with strategies to enhance logistics and income growth in the rapidly developing Lancang-Mekong region.

The third session was on Sustainable Energy and Environment which delved into sustainable energy solutions and conservation efforts to foster environment-friendly and resource-efficient practices.

All three sessions engaged participants in developing actionable recommendations that will serve as valuable references for future initiatives and discussions, ensuring continuity and progress toward regional goals. Central to the discussions were scalable models for empowering Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs), which are regarded as the backbone of the GMS economy. The forum also sought the alignment of regional policies and initiatives with the SDGs and encouraged innovation and green practices to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

As building capacities and forging robust partnerships are essential for strengthening GMS resilience, efforts to combine the expertise and resources of public and private sectors were explored to help navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities for growth. Delegates also called for the narrowing of development gaps in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Viet Nam (CLMV) to ensure inclusive growth and unlock the true potential of the GMS as an international economic powerhouse.

MI designed the forum to be interactive and immersive, providing the participants with the opportunity to join a study tour of Kunming Railway Vocation and Technical College (KRVTTC) and Kunming International Flora Auction Trading Center (KIFA).

The Mekong Forum 2023 concluded on a note of optimism, with a shared commitment among participants to pursue transformative changes toward a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous GMS.

About Mekong Institute

Mekong Institute (MI) deepens regional cooperation and integration through capacity development, dialogue, and advocacy for the acceleration of sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation in the GMS. Founded and represented by Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, MI's strategies are aligned with the core tenets of the GMS Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030, ASEAN Economic Community, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. MI supports these frameworks through the implementation of projects across the areas of Agricultural Development and Commercialization, Trade and Investment Facilitation, and Sustainable Energy and Environment, while addressing issues of social inclusion and vulnerability, digital economy and innovation, and labor mobility.

For media inquiries, contact:

Anusara Tanpitak

Communications and Knowledge Management Manager, Mekong Institute

anusara@mekonginstitute.org.