

ORGANIZED BY



SPONSORED BY



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Aid Programme

CO-HOSTED BY

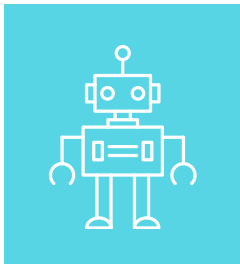
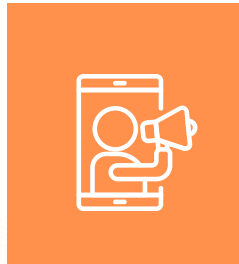
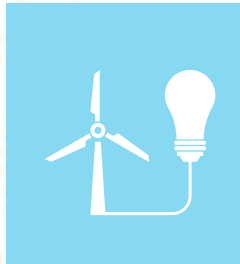
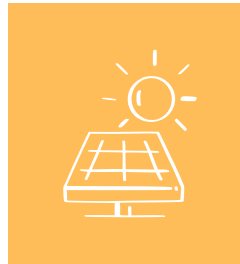
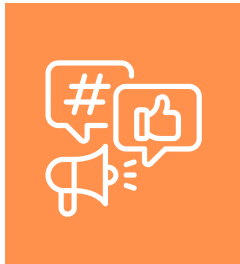


IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH



MEKONG FORUM 2024 PROCEEDINGS

BREAKING THROUGH NEW HORIZONS



July 31 - August 1, 2024

Pullman Khon Kaen Raja Orchid
Khon Kaen, Thailand



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	03
Event Partners	06
Event Focal Contact	07
Agenda	08
Overview & Objectives	13
Opening Messages	14
Keynote Addresses	16
Digitalization by Design: Challenges for GMS Development and Cooperation by Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee	16
The State of DIT in the GMS: Opportunities and Challenges by Dr. Aladdin Rillo	19
Bridging the Digital Divide: Strategies for Inclusive Digital Transformation by Mr. Bing Lidong	21
Panel Discussion	24
MF 2024 Exhibit	26
Breakout Sessions	29
Terrain 1 - Revolutionizing Food Systems: Digital Transformation in Mekong's Agriculture Sector	30
Terrain 2 - Harnessing DIT for Inclusive and Secure Trade and Finance in the GMS	32
Terrain 3 - Powering the Future: Tech-Driven Energy Solutions in the GMS	34
Terrain 4 - Inclusive Digital Societies: Engaging Women and Youth in Accelerating DIT Adoption in the GMS	36
Terrain 5 - Enhancing GMS Tourism through Digital Pathways	38
Terrain 6 - Digitizing the Path to Environmental Stewardship: Digital Technologies and Innovations for the Environment	40
Terrain 7 - Reimagining Education Through DIT	42
Reception Dinner	44
Forging Partnerships	45
Closing Plenary	46
Communications	48



Executive Summary

The Mekong Forum 2024 marked the 10th edition of this flagship event organized by the Mekong Institute (MI). Under the theme **“Breaking Through New Horizons: Digitalization, Innovation, and Technology (DIT) in the GMS,”** the forum facilitated regional dialogue on the role of digital technologies in fostering sustainable and inclusive development in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). The event brought together over 330 participants, with the support of key partners such as the People’s Republic of China and the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP).

The forum sought to lay the foundation for a subregional innovation strategy aligned with GMS-2030 and ASEAN’s digital and connectivity agendas, tailored to the GMS’s diverse needs. Discussions centered on digital transformation, with a focus on leveraging emerging technologies to address regional challenges and drive inclusive economic growth.

MI Executive Director **Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn** described the forum as an open platform for dialogue, encouraging participants to make the most of the opportunity to catalyze digital technology use in bridging gaps between policy and implementation.

MI Council Chairperson **H. E. Mr. Chea Chanthum** talked about the transformative power of digital innovation, stressing the importance of collaboration in fostering a digitally integrated and sustainable GMS.

The event’s three keynote addresses wove together a narrative of how digital transformation can drive progress across the GMS. They painted a comprehensive overview of current contexts and the digital future that the GMS is poised to embrace.

Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman of the MI Steering Committee, opened by emphasizing how digitalization by design enhances efficiency and fuels innovation across industries, with a particular focus on the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). He said that digital literacy is critical to tackling global challenges like the digital divide and cybersecurity, both of which are essential for ensuring sustainable development.

Following this, **Dr. Aladdin Rillo**, Managing Director for Policy Design and Operations at the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), provided a deeper look into ASEAN's rapid yet uneven digital transformation. He said that robust regulatory frameworks and building public trust are key elements to ensuring that digital technologies contribute meaningfully to a sustainable future.

Finally, **Mr. Bing Lidong**, Director of Alibaba's Language Technology Lab, explored the global impact of Generative AI. He introduced SeaLLMs, AI models specifically designed for Southeast Asian languages, aimed at bridging the digital divide and fostering inclusive technological progress across the region.

Right after the keynote, a panel discussion moderated by **Dr. Watcharas Leelawath** addressed the GMS's readiness for digital transformation. He was joined by a panel of experts, including **Mr. Ruhimat Soerakoesoemah** of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP), **Ms. Wang Aihua** of China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT), and **Mr. Voradis Vinyaratn** of TSPACE Digital Company. They tackled important issues such as AI skills training, cybersecurity collaboration, the need for cross-border data sharing, and establishing a supportive policy framework to encourage innovation while maintaining responsible use of digital technologies.



Keynote Speakers

At Mekong Forum 2024, a tech-savvy exhibit showcased innovations from nearly 30 tech organizations, startups, and research institutions, highlighting advancements in agriculture, e-commerce, and healthcare for the GMS. Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn and Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee led the unveiling ceremony of the exhibit, and a guided tour of exhibit booths. Among exhibitors are organizations offering digital tools and services for farm management. Also featured were technologies and innovations like e-sports integration in education, immersive AI photo booths, virtual reality experiences, and personalized healthcare tech.

In a conversation with Reuters News Senior Correspondent **Mr. Panu Wongcha-um**, Mr. Suriyan stressed that while Digital Innovation Technology (DIT) can address regional challenges, the focus should remain on human capital and inclusive policies. He outlined the need for a human-centered ecosystem and emphasized that partnerships should drive actionable results, starting with government-led DIT investments and expanding to the private sector.

Wrapping up the two-day program, China's Permanent Representative to UNESCAP, **Mr. Ye Xuenong**, congratulated the forum for offering a valuable platform for participants to discuss the transformative role of digital innovation in key sectors such as food security, trade, and energy. He praised the forum for injecting "new content and vitality" into regional digital innovation cooperation and expressed optimism about the potential of these discussions to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development across the GMS.

In his closing remarks, **Mr. Suriyan** expressed gratitude for the event's success and the collaborative spirit it fostered. He emphasized the need for interdisciplinary efforts to scale DIT in the GMS and hoped that the forum's discussions would translate into results. He acknowledged the contributions of all involved, including keynote and terrain speakers, development partners, and technical teams, and thanked sponsors and co-hosts, particularly China. He urged continued partnership for achieving tangible outcomes.



MEKONG FORUM = 2024

Breaking Through New Horizons
Digitalization, Innovation, and Technology in the GMS

July 31 to August 1, 2024 | Khon Kaen, Thailand

EVENT PARTNERS

The Mekong Forum is a platform for dialogue and collaboration on sustainable development in the GMS. This annual flagship event has been shaping regional discourse and priorities for over a decade.

For its milestone year, Mekong Forum 2024 was made possible through the generous support of the People's Republic of China and the New Zealand Aid Programme (NZAP), and was co-hosted by a remarkable lineup of organizations, including the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau (TCEB), MitrPhol Innovation & Research Center, Thailand Beverage Logistics, Khon Kaen University (KKU), Winrock International, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Chulalongkorn University, and the ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO).

ORGANIZED BY



SPONSORED BY



CO-HOSTED BY



In Partnership with



EVENT FOCAL CONTACT



**OVERALL EVENT
MANAGEMENT**

SARA

Anusara Tanpitak
Communications and Knowledge
Management Manager
Mekong Institute
anusara@mekonginstitute.org

**PARTNERSHIP
AND EXTERNAL
RELATIONS**



ANNE

Pornwilai Pumira
External Relations and Protocol Manager
pornwilai@mekonginstitute.org



**LOGISTICS AND
GENERAL SERVICES**

MEDSAI

Natchaya Potiwat
General Service Supervisor
Mekong Institute
natchaya@mekonginstitute.org

**EXHIBITION
MANAGEMENT**



LEIGH

Anna Leigh Anillo
Communications and Knowledge
Management Coordinator
Mekong Institute
leigh@mekonginstitute.org



IT SUPPORT

HON

Narathip Dahan
IT Officer
Mekong Institute
narathip@mekonginstitute.org

OVERALL SUPPORT



PAO

Prakob Kaewpany
Communications Assistant
Mekong Institute
prakob@mekonginsitute.org

AGENDA | DAY 1 AM

Activity	Time
Day 1 – Wednesday July 31, 2024	
Registration	08:00-09:00
Greetings and Welcome By Ms. Hao Wen, Senior Program Coordinator, MI, Emcee	09:00-09:05
Welcome Remarks By Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI	09:05-09:10
Opening Remarks By Mr. Chea Chanthum, MI Council Chairperson and Secretary-General General Secretariat for Population and Development, Ministry of Planning, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	09:10-09:20
Opening Remarks by Mr. Paisan Rupanichkij, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand	09:20-09:30
Keynote Address on “Digitalization by Design: Challenges for GMS Development and Cooperation” By Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Steering Committee Chairman, MI	09:30-09:55
Keynote Address on “The State of DIT in the GMS: Opportunities and Challenges” By Dr. Aladdin D. Rillo, Managing Director for Policy Design and Operations, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)	09:55-10:20
Keynote Address on “Bridging the Digital Divide: Strategies for Inclusive Digital Transformation” By Mr. Bing Lidong, Director of the Language Technology Lab DAMO Academy of Alibaba Group	10:20-10:45
Photo Opportunity	10:45-10:55
Refreshment and Networking	10:55-11:10
Panel Discussion on “Examining Global and Local Perspectives for a Strong Regional DIT Community” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Ruhimat Soerakoesoemah, Head of the Subregional Office for South-East Asia, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) • Mme. Wang Aihua, Deputy Chief Engineer, China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) • Mr. Voradis Vinyaratn, Managing Director, TSPACE Digital Company • Moderated by Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Honorary Advisor, Bolliger and Company Thailand 	11:10-12:00
Overview of Thematic Breakout Sessions	12:00-12:05
Exhibition Opening	12:05-12:30
Lunch	12:30-13:30

AGENDA | DAY 1 PM

TERRAIN 1: Revolutionizing Food Systems: Digital Transformations in Mekong's Agriculture Sector	TERRAIN 2: Harnessing DIT for Inclusive and Secure Trade and Finance in the GMS	TERRAIN 3: Powering the Future: Tech-Driven Energy Solutions in the GMS	TERRAIN 4: Inclusive Digital Societies: Engaging Women and Youth in Accelerating DIT Adoption in the GMS
SPEAKERS			
<p>Ms.Dada Bacudo Advisor to ASEAN Climate Resilience Network (ASEAN-CRN)</p> <p>Assoc.Prof Ts. Dr. Nur Azura Binti Adam Deputy Director for Programs, Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)</p> <p>Dr. Preesan Rakwatin Vice President of Digital Agriculture Development and Promotion, Digital Economic Promotion Agency (DEPA)</p> <p>Ms. Pouchamarn Wongsanga Regional Component Leader, Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture Value Chain (ASEAN AgriTrade), German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)</p> <p>Ms. Zhang Bin Deputy Division Director, Foreign Economic Cooperation Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), China</p>	<p>Mr.Tanapat Vattanapakanchai Senior Manager, Strategy, ABeam Consulting (Thailand) Ltd.</p> <p>Mr. Ryosuke Fujioka Chief Representative, The Association for Overseas Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Partnership (AOTS) and AEM-METI Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee (AMEICC)</p> <p>Ms. Khanit Phatong Executive Advisor and Chief Information Officer, Electronic Transaction Development Agency (ETDA), Thailand</p>	<p>Ms. Yejin Ha Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Division, UNESCAP</p> <p>Mr. Beni Suryadi Head of Power, Fossil Fuel, Alternative Energy and Storage Department and Acting Head of Sustainable and Renewable Energy Department, ASEAN Centre for Energy (ACE)</p> <p>Mr. Andy Chun General Manager, Verywords Co., Ltd.</p> <p>Dr. Liu Chen Acting Division Director of International Energy Consultancy Department, China Electric Power Planing & Engineering Institute (EPPEI)</p> <p>Ms. Thanawadee Deetae Head, New power Generation Development Planning Section, Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT)</p>	<p>Ms. Rury Demsey Junior Project Officer, ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)</p> <p>Dr. Sizwile Khoza Research Fellow, Stockholm Environment Institute - Asia Center</p> <p>Ms. Lina Maulidina Sabrina Senior Program Officer, ERIA: Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia</p> <p>Mr. Senjaya Mulia, Founder of ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO)</p> <p>Mr. Veerawit Tianchainan Chief of Party USAID - WWF Mekong For the Future (MFF)</p> <p>Ms. Than Tha Aung Senior Program Coordinator, Sustainable Energy and Environment Department, MI</p>
MODERATED BY			
<p>Mr. William Sparks Chief of Party, USDA Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (RAIN)</p>	<p>Dr. Watcharas Leelawath Honorary Advisor, Bolliger and Company Thailand</p>	<p>Ms. Tina Wang Program Manager, Sustainable Energy and Environment Department, MI</p>	<p>Ms. Yupaporn Siribut Program Officer, Sustainable Energy and Environment Department, MI</p>

13:30-16:30

AGENDA | DAY 1 PM

Activity	Time
Mekong Forum Reception Dinner: Partnership and Networking Night	18:30 – 20:30
Greetings and Welcome By Anusara Tanpitak, MI, Emcee	18.30 – 18.40
Video Presentation on “Mekong Forum”	18.40 – 18.45
Welcome and Opening Remarks By Mr. Chea Chanthum, MI Council Chairperson and Secretary-General General Secretariat for Population and Development, Ministry of Planning, Phnom Penh, Cambodia	18.45 – 18.50
Toast Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Steering Committee Chairman, MI	18.50 – 18.55
Digital Performance “Molam Metaverse” By Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University	18.55 – 19.10
Networking Opportunity	19.10 – 20.30
Wrap-Up of the Night By emcee	20.30 – 20.35

AGENDA | DAY 2 AM

Activity	Time															
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>TERRAIN 5: Enhancing GMS Tourism through Digital Pathways</p> </td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>TERRAIN 6: Digitizing the Path to Environmental Stewardship: Digital Technologies and Innovations for the Environment</p> </td> <td style="width: 33%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>TERRAIN 7: Reimagining Education: Evolving Capacity Development through DIT</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px;">SPEAKERS</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Ms. Pattamon Rungchavanont Head of Solutions Mapping, UNDP Accelerator Lab, Thailand</p> <p>Mr. Steven Schipani Principal Tourism Industry Specialist, Asian Development Bank (ADB)</p> <p>Mr. Souliyo Vongdala, co-Founder and CEO of LOCA</p> </td> <td style="padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Prof.Dr. Wang Hua Academic Director and Professor, Zhejiang University</p> <p>Mr. Ryosuke Miyashita Deputy Director, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</p> <p>Mr. Suradech Taweesaengsakulthai CEO of Cho Thavee Co. Ltd ., and Co-Founder and Chairman of Khon Kaen City Development (KKT) Co., Ltd.</p> <p>Dr. Thanapon Piman Senior Research Fellow and Water Resources Cluster Lead, Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI) Asia</p> <p>Ms. Yejin Kim Project Manager, Republic of Korea – UN Office for South-South Cooperation Facility (Phase 3)/ P-Link</p> <p>Mr. Dong Un Park Research Fellow, Office of Sustainable Innovation Policy Research at the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEP)</p> </td> <td style="padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont Centre Director, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Center</p> <p>Asst.Prof.Dr. Denpong Soodphakdee Vice President for Education and Digital, KKU</p> <p>Ms. Lilian Tan Li Jun E-Learning Consultant, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI)</p> <p>Ms. Rika Yorozu Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok</p> <p>Mr. Prayuth TugnsaNgob Chief Technology Officer, Enterprise Business, Huawei Technologies</p> <p>Prof.Dr. Wanida Kanarkard Lecturer, Faculty of Engineering, KKU</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center; background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 5px;">MODERATED BY</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta Director of TIF, MI</p> </td> <td style="padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI</p> </td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<p>TERRAIN 5: Enhancing GMS Tourism through Digital Pathways</p>	<p>TERRAIN 6: Digitizing the Path to Environmental Stewardship: Digital Technologies and Innovations for the Environment</p>	<p>TERRAIN 7: Reimagining Education: Evolving Capacity Development through DIT</p>	SPEAKERS			<p>Ms. Pattamon Rungchavanont Head of Solutions Mapping, UNDP Accelerator Lab, Thailand</p> <p>Mr. Steven Schipani Principal Tourism Industry Specialist, Asian Development Bank (ADB)</p> <p>Mr. Souliyo Vongdala, co-Founder and CEO of LOCA</p>	<p>Prof.Dr. Wang Hua Academic Director and Professor, Zhejiang University</p> <p>Mr. Ryosuke Miyashita Deputy Director, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</p> <p>Mr. Suradech Taweesaengsakulthai CEO of Cho Thavee Co. Ltd ., and Co-Founder and Chairman of Khon Kaen City Development (KKT) Co., Ltd.</p> <p>Dr. Thanapon Piman Senior Research Fellow and Water Resources Cluster Lead, Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI) Asia</p> <p>Ms. Yejin Kim Project Manager, Republic of Korea – UN Office for South-South Cooperation Facility (Phase 3)/ P-Link</p> <p>Mr. Dong Un Park Research Fellow, Office of Sustainable Innovation Policy Research at the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEP)</p>	<p>Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont Centre Director, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Center</p> <p>Asst.Prof.Dr. Denpong Soodphakdee Vice President for Education and Digital, KKU</p> <p>Ms. Lilian Tan Li Jun E-Learning Consultant, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI)</p> <p>Ms. Rika Yorozu Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok</p> <p>Mr. Prayuth TugnsaNgob Chief Technology Officer, Enterprise Business, Huawei Technologies</p> <p>Prof.Dr. Wanida Kanarkard Lecturer, Faculty of Engineering, KKU</p>	MODERATED BY			<p>Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta Director of TIF, MI</p>	<p>Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI</p>		<p>09:00-12:00</p>
<p>TERRAIN 5: Enhancing GMS Tourism through Digital Pathways</p>	<p>TERRAIN 6: Digitizing the Path to Environmental Stewardship: Digital Technologies and Innovations for the Environment</p>	<p>TERRAIN 7: Reimagining Education: Evolving Capacity Development through DIT</p>														
SPEAKERS																
<p>Ms. Pattamon Rungchavanont Head of Solutions Mapping, UNDP Accelerator Lab, Thailand</p> <p>Mr. Steven Schipani Principal Tourism Industry Specialist, Asian Development Bank (ADB)</p> <p>Mr. Souliyo Vongdala, co-Founder and CEO of LOCA</p>	<p>Prof.Dr. Wang Hua Academic Director and Professor, Zhejiang University</p> <p>Mr. Ryosuke Miyashita Deputy Director, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</p> <p>Mr. Suradech Taweesaengsakulthai CEO of Cho Thavee Co. Ltd ., and Co-Founder and Chairman of Khon Kaen City Development (KKT) Co., Ltd.</p> <p>Dr. Thanapon Piman Senior Research Fellow and Water Resources Cluster Lead, Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI) Asia</p> <p>Ms. Yejin Kim Project Manager, Republic of Korea – UN Office for South-South Cooperation Facility (Phase 3)/ P-Link</p> <p>Mr. Dong Un Park Research Fellow, Office of Sustainable Innovation Policy Research at the Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEP)</p>	<p>Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont Centre Director, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Center</p> <p>Asst.Prof.Dr. Denpong Soodphakdee Vice President for Education and Digital, KKU</p> <p>Ms. Lilian Tan Li Jun E-Learning Consultant, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI)</p> <p>Ms. Rika Yorozu Programme Specialist, UNESCO Bangkok</p> <p>Mr. Prayuth TugnsaNgob Chief Technology Officer, Enterprise Business, Huawei Technologies</p> <p>Prof.Dr. Wanida Kanarkard Lecturer, Faculty of Engineering, KKU</p>														
MODERATED BY																
<p>Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta Director of TIF, MI</p>	<p>Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI</p>															

AGENDA | DAY 2 PM

Lunch	12:00-13:00
Visit to Exhibition / Tech Demonstrations By Eastword de Guzman Manlises, Emcee, MI	13:00-14:00
Coffee Break	14:00-14:15
Terrain Report Back in Plenary By Representatives from Each Terrain	14:15-14:45
In Conversation Synthesis of Actionable Recommendations and Way Forward By Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI By Mr. Panu Wongcha-um, Senior Correspondent, Reuters News	14:45-15:30
Closing Remarks By Mr. Ye Xuenong, Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP (TBC)	15:30-15:45
Closing Remarks By Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director, MI	15:45-16:00
MOU Signing Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none">Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, Chiang Mai UniversityCollege of Local Administration, Khon Kaen UniversitySouthwest Forestry University, China	16:00-16:10



OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

Held in Khon Kaen, Thailand, where Mekong Forum was born, Mekong Forum 2024 kicked off with a grand opening plenary that was facilitated by **Ms. Hao Wen**, a Senior Program Coordinator at MI. Ms. Hao Wen encouraged participants to actively engage in the discussions and sideline activities. She also provided an overview of the two-day forum, including its objectives.

The Mekong Forum 2024 aimed to lay the groundwork for a subregional innovation strategy consistent with the *GMS-2030* and ASEAN's digital and connectivity agendas, and tailored to the diverse needs and ambitions of the *GMS*. To this end, Mekong Forum 2024 showcased the profile of the subregion's DIT in agriculture, trade, energy, and the environment while promoting the synergies between these sectors. It facilitated multistakeholder exchange of insights, experiences, and effective practices in DIT to enhance learning and adaptation in the *GMS*.

The forum was instrumental in formulating actionable strategies and initiatives to bolster the DIT ecosystems across the *GMS*, addressing the digital divide and fostering inclusive growth and social equity. It was a venue for the development of new policy recommendations that would facilitate and support comprehensive digital integration across key sectors.

Finally, it strengthened ties and forged new partnerships within the *GMS* and with ASEAN member states, international organizations, and the private sector, capitalizing on DIT advancements for the dual goals of economic growth and social inclusivity.



PULLMAN KHON KAEN RAJA ORCHID
Khon Kaen, Thailand
Venue

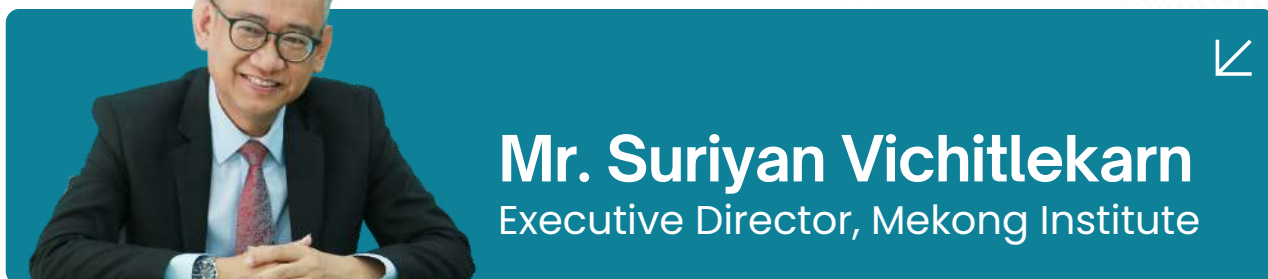


MS. HAO WEN
Senior Program Coordinator
Mekong Institute
Emcee



GUESTS OF HONOR

OPENING MESSAGES



Formally opening the event, MI Executive Director, Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, warmly welcomed participants and acknowledged the vital role of partners and sponsors in making the forum possible and meaningful. Mr. Suriyan said that “Mekong Forum is an open platform where all stakeholders can come together to discuss issues that matter to the subregion and identify approaches and ways to address challenges for the benefit of the people. This is what Mekong Forum offers.” Emphasizing this year’s theme, he stressed the need to bridge the gap between policy and implementation by leveraging digital technology and its potential. “While policies are in place, we must ensure their effective implementation. One way to achieve this is by tapping into digital technology and best practices,” he said.



H. E. Mr. Chea Chanthum, MI Council Chairperson and Secretary-General of the General Secretariat for Population and Development at the Ministry of Planning in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, gave an opening remarks that started with an expression of gratitude to the sponsors, co-hosts, and partners of Mekong Forum 2024. He said that they were “instrumental in making the forum possible” and recognized their “dedication to our shared mission of fostering sustainable development and regional cooperation in the GMS.”

H. E. Mr. Chanthum said that the theme of Mekong Forum 2024 “underscores the transformative power of digital innovation and technology in shaping our future.” He assured participants that “this forum is an open and safe space for dialogue,” welcoming the diverse range of stakeholders present, including “regional experts from international organizations, governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia.”

He elaborated on the specific objectives of the forum, stressing that “our collective efforts are essential to drive a digitally integrated and innovative GMS that thrives sustainably and inclusively.” He then introduced a new feature of the forum – “the concept of seven terrains—dynamic sessions with distinguished experts.” He explained that “the discussions in each terrain will dive deeply into actionable insights and recommendations that will propel our collective progress forward.”

OPENING MESSAGES



Mr. Paisan Rupanichkij
Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry
of Foreign Affairs of Thailand



Following H. E. Mr. Chanthum was Mr. Paisan Rupanichkij, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, who expressed his honor in returning to Khon Kaen for Mekong Forum 2024, reflecting on his previous visit in 2016 during the 20th anniversary of the MI. He noted that MI's 30th anniversary is happening in less than two years. He congratulated the institute in advance and acknowledged its growth into a recognized center of excellence in research and knowledge dissemination in the GMS.

Mr. Rupanichkij highlighted the timeliness of the forum's theme, noting that the challenges and opportunities arising from digital transformation transcend borders. "Thailand is therefore keen to work with other countries in the region and beyond as well as MI to drive digital innovation and technology towards a more connected and inclusive GMS," he stated.

He mentioned Thailand's upcoming role in hosting the 9th Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Chiang Mai on August 16, 2024. He emphasized the significance of this meeting, which will bring together the six member countries of MI, to discuss various issues, including the challenges posed by digital transformation. He noted that in recent years, GMS countries have cooperated to combat cybercrime, money laundering, online gambling, telecom fraud, and other cybersecurity issues. He expressed hope for "a concrete deliverable outcome from the upcoming minister meeting in Chiang Mai."

For Thailand, safeguarding the digital environment is paramount, with a focus on AI and cybersecurity programs. Mr. Rupanichkij stressed the importance of promoting awareness and ethics in digital innovation, stating that AI should be leveraged to "prevent potential threats and online dangers, including personal data protection." He concluded by highlighting that this initiative will not only improve cybersecurity but also foster trust in digital technologies, with the Mekong-Lancang framework promoting exchanges and cooperation in science, technology, AI development, security, governance, and capacity building to empower sustainable development in the GMS.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee
Steering Committee Chairman,
Mekong Institute



Digitalization by Design: Challenges for GMS Development and Cooperation

Opening the series of plenary keynotes, Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee explored the theme of "digitalization by design" and its strategic importance for the future of the GMS. He framed his discussion within the broader context of development, emphasizing that digitalization must be intentional and purposeful rather than left to unfold by default. Drawing on concepts from **Value**, a book by Mark Carney, Dr. Narongchai emphasized that just as industrialization changed the world—both positively and negatively—so too will digitalization. However, this time, the GMS must be proactive in shaping how these changes impact society.

Reflecting on the historical trajectory of industrialization, he drew parallels with the ongoing digital revolution, reminding the audience of the significant advancements from mechanization and electrification in the 1900s, which both improved lives and introduced new global challenges. He warned that without careful planning, digitalization could similarly result in unintended negative consequences. To prevent this, he stressed the importance of digitalization by design, ensuring that these technologies are used for the betterment of society, rather than allowed to unfold haphazardly.

He then turned to the rapid evolution of digital technologies, illustrating the breathtaking speed at which advancements have occurred—from the era of 1G analog phones to today's cutting-edge technologies like Web 3.0, AI, and blockchain. He explained how the transition to Web 3.0 will revolutionize how we interact, removing the need for intermediaries by enabling direct peer-to-peer transactions through blockchain technology. He also explored the significance of generative artificial intelligence (AI), which he described as capable of creating entirely new content—highlighting both its incredible potential and the risks associated with misuse, such as the creation of misleading or harmful AI-generated content.

Dr. Narongchai touched on AI's transformative role across various sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, and travel. He emphasized the practical applications of AI in smart farming, where farmers could harness real-time data to make better decisions and increase efficiency. Similarly, he discussed the role of AI in healthcare, with advances in diagnostics, such as faster cancer detection systems, allowing for more accurate and efficient treatments.



In the travel industry, he shared a personal anecdote about his granddaughter's seamless use of digital tools to explore the world, underscoring how digitalization has empowered individuals to interact with their environments in new ways.

However, he also issued a word of caution about the dangers of AI misuse, particularly the rising issue of deepfake technology. He cited examples of AI-generated content, where public figures appeared to be singing or dancing, even though they hadn't performed these actions in reality. He stressed that while AI offers immense benefits, there is an urgent need for regulation and responsible governance to prevent malicious use.

Digital literacy was a recurring theme in his address. He argued that equipping citizens with the knowledge and skills to understand and navigate these technologies is crucial for addressing challenges like the digital divide and cybersecurity threats. Without widespread digital literacy, he warned, societies risk leaving behind large segments of the population, exacerbating inequalities. He called for investment in education and knowledge enhancement, highlighting that increased literacy in digital tools would boost productivity and enable the GMS to harness the full potential of AI technologies.

Beyond digital literacy, Dr. Narongchai underscored the need for **cross-border cooperation and public-private partnerships** to drive innovation. He spoke about the GMS's unique position within Southeast Asia and how a concerted effort to integrate digital technologies into sectors like agriculture, energy, and public services could lead to unparalleled growth. By focusing on cost-saving and efficiency-enhancing digital solutions, such as generative AI, he argued that the GMS could unlock new opportunities for economic development and improve the overall quality of life for its citizens.

He also introduced the concept of **"democratizing technology,"** particularly in countries like India, where the cost of internet access has dramatically reduced, allowing more people to participate in the digital economy. He urged GMS nations to strive for similar democratization, noting that affordable access to the internet and digital tools could spur economic growth and innovation.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Narongchai emphasized that **digitalization by design should be guided by public interest.** Both public and private institutions need to adopt policies that ensure that technologies like AI and blockchain are used ethically and responsibly, with a focus on benefiting society as a whole. He called on leaders in the GMS to prioritize accessibility, equity, and literacy in their digital transformation strategies, ensuring that everyone—regardless of background—can participate in and benefit from the digital economy.

Dr. Narongchai's keynote was a call to action for the GMS to not only embrace digital technologies but to do so with a deliberate and ethical framework that prioritizes sustainable development, inclusivity, and human empowerment.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Dr. Aladdin Rillo

Managing Director for Policy Design and Operations, Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)



The State of DIT in the GMS: Opportunities and Challenges

Dr. Aladdin Rillo tackled the rapid yet incomplete digital transformation within the GMS and ASEAN. In his keynote, he emphasized the critical role of **knowledge and capacity building** in facilitating this transformation, noting that the region holds great potential for building a robust digital economy.

Dr. Rillo highlighted the transformative power of digital technologies, particularly in promoting economic competitiveness, increasing access to goods and services, and addressing sustainability challenges such as energy transition and climate change. He pointed to the growth of e-commerce, the rise in internet users, and the widespread adoption of digital payments as clear evidence of how digitalization is reshaping the region. By 2030, it is projected that the internet economy in ASEAN will grow from USD100 billion in 2019 to USD2 trillion, with initiatives like the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) driving this momentum.

Despite these promising developments, Dr. Rillo acknowledged several challenges, particularly the digital divide. Digital adoption remains uneven, with significant gaps in access, affordability, infrastructure, and policy implementation. He highlighted that only a small percentage of ASEAN SMEs are digitally integrated, and much of the digital economy's benefits are concentrated in urban areas.



Dr. Rillo stressed that addressing these challenges requires stronger implementation of digital initiatives, particularly in **supporting SMEs and expanding digital infrastructure to underserved areas**. He also emphasized the importance of digital knowledge, urging institutions like the Mekong Institute to **collaborate in promoting digital talent, open innovation, and entrepreneurship**. He concluded by underscoring the need to **build public trust in digital technologies** and ensure an environment that supports regulatory frameworks, innovation, and security, warning that without these, digital transformation efforts may fail.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Mr. Bing Lidong

Director, Language Technology Lab
Alibaba

Bridging the Digital Divide: Strategies for Inclusive Digital Transformation

Mr. Bing Lidong's keynote address focused on bridging the digital divide and **fostering inclusive digital transformation** through the application of generative AI. He introduced Alibaba's SeaLLMs project, which aims to build **language-specific AI models for Southeast Asian languages**, including those less represented in global models like Thai, Vietnamese, and Indonesian.

He highlighted that while major global languages, such as English and Chinese, perform well with current large language models (LLMs), many regional languages are underserved due to a lack of training data and language-specific capabilities. This presents a challenge for creating inclusive AI solutions in the ASEAN region.

To address these gaps, Alibaba's SeaLLMs project focuses on building AI models tailored for Southeast Asian languages, ensuring that regional cultural and linguistic nuances are respected. The project also emphasizes mutual translation between regional languages without relying on English as an intermediary, promoting **cross-cultural communication** within ASEAN.



Mr. Lidong discussed the technical approach of language-specific retraining, allowing models to improve their performance by focusing on a small percentage of parameters for each language. He acknowledged ongoing challenges, such as AI's tendency to hallucinate or generate false information, particularly in low-resource languages, but emphasized the need for continuous improvement.

He concluded by discussing real-world applications of SeaLLMs, such as its use by startups in the e-commerce sector, and expressed Alibaba's commitment to inclusive AI development in Southeast Asia.





Plenary Speakers



Guests of Honor



PANEL DISCUSSION

Following the keynotes, a panel of experts from global and local organizations discussed GMS's readiness for digital transformation. Moderated by Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Honorary Advisor to Bolliger and Company Thailand, and former MI Executive Director, the panelists provided critical insights into opportunities and priorities for GMS governments and stakeholders, covering essential social and cultural changes, AI skills training, cybersecurity collaboration, e-commerce success, and startup support.

Dr. Watcharas opened the discussion by reflecting on the evolution of priorities in the GMS over the years. He noted that the focus in the 1990s was on infrastructure and physical connectivity, shifting in the early 2000s to regulatory connectivity. Now, the emphasis is on digital connectivity, marking a new era for the GMS. He posed the question of whether the region is ready to seize the opportunities presented by this shift and what the key priorities should be.

Mr. Ruhimat Soerakoesoemah, Head of the Subregional Office for South-East Asia at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP), highlighted the need for the GMS to adapt to and embrace the rapid pace of AI and digital innovation, stressing that governments are trying to catch up with these changes. He underscored the importance of using digital technologies to accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), noting that current challenges may delay their achievement until 2062 instead of 2030. He emphasized that digital technology is being embraced primarily by the private sector, and collaboration between governments, the private sector, and key trading partners like China and the US is crucial. The priority should be on leveraging these partnerships to extend the reach and impact of digital technologies.



Moderator
**Dr. Watcharas
Leelawath**

Honorary Advisor,
Bolliger and Company
Thailand

Ms. Wang Aihua, Deputy Chief Engineer of China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT), discussed the role of digital transformation as a driving force for economic growth, particularly through the rise of consumer internet applications over the past two decades. She identified two key areas for prioritization:

1. *Development of Industrial Internet Applications*: Encouraging businesses to establish seamless data flow across various stages of production and consumption to foster new business models like intelligent production and personalized services.
2. *Advancing Digital and Network Transformation in the Service Industry*: Enhancing service capabilities through new information consumption models, focusing on areas such as e-commerce, smart logistics, and healthcare.

Mr. Voradis Vinyaratn, Managing Director at TSPACE Digital Company, emphasized that technology transformation is fundamentally about people transformation, highlighting the dual potential of AI as both a positive and negative force. He identified four priority areas for the GMS:

1. *Digital Infrastructure*: The rapid pace of technology requires proper infrastructure, such as high-speed internet and cloud services, to ensure people can effectively utilize new technologies.
2. *Collaborative Skill Development*: Addressing the shortage of skilled talent by promoting upskilling and reskilling across borders, with institutions like the Mekong Institute (MI) playing a key role in training and education. Governments should include AI in educational curricula and incentivize private enterprises to invest in workforce development.
3. *Cross-Border Data Sharing*: Recognizing data as a valuable and potentially dangerous resource, there is a need for conclusive agreements on data governance and regulation to maximize the benefits of shared data across the region.
4. *Policy and Regulatory Frameworks*: Governments must work closely with the private sector to shape policies that encourage innovation while ensuring responsible use of technology, rather than simply dictating terms.



MR. RUHIMAT SOERAKOESOEMAH
Head of the Subregional Office
for South-East Asia
United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(UNESCAP)



MS. WANG AIHUA
Deputy Chief Engineer
China Academy of Information and
Communications Technology (CAICT)



MR. VORADIS VINYARATN
Managing Director
TSPACE Digital Company



MF 2024 EXHIBIT

Tech-savvy exhibit displays took center stage at the two-day forum. A standout feature of this year's event, the Mekong Forum 2024 Exhibit hosted nearly 30 tech organizations, startups, and research institutions showcasing their latest digital innovations, transforming sectors such as agriculture, trade, energy, and the environment. MI Executive Director **Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn** and MI Steering Committee Chair **Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee**, alongside other guests of honor, led the unveiling ceremony for the exhibit. Mr. Suriyan then guided a tour of the exhibition hall, engaging with exhibitors and providing an overview of their innovative technologies and informational displays. The exhibitors included organizations involved in healthcare, e-commerce, smart farming management, e-sports, and metaverse and virtual reality content development, among others. See page x for the full list of exhibitors.

On the second day of the forum and exhibit, MI hosted a tech demonstration featuring five exhibitors. Among them was the **Khon Kaen University Phenome Center**, introducing their phenomics services that promote personalized healthcare based on individual health and body trait changes over time.

ListenField and **Greenovator**, agri-tech companies championing sustainable agriculture through smart farming management, also demonstrated their innovations. ListenField employs mobile tools and equipment for analyzing farm, weather, and soil data, while Greenovator developed a digital application guiding farmers step-by-step in the proper application of implements.

In the field of e-commerce, **Agrimono**, a wholesale seller of fertilizers, medicines, seeds, livestock, and agricultural equipment, presented its application catering to all stakeholders along the agriculture value chain.

Meanwhile, **Focus Arena** and **Squid Esports** are enhancing the public perception of online gaming in Thailand, starting with the opening of Focus Arena's first official esports venue in Northeast Thailand. Aligning with the Khon Kaen Smart City ambition, the partnership offers youth and esports enthusiasts a premier platform to showcase their skills and elevate the region's esports scene. Their booth, equipped with gaming computers, aimed to demonstrate how esports can be integrated into education by providing internationally accredited programs to

Thai schools, helping them set up their own esports clubs and preparing students for careers in the billion-dollar esports industry.

Other standout exhibitors included the **Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)**, which featured a creative activity where participants took photos that generated AI-animated versions of themselves. The **Mitr Phol Innovation and Research Center** offered bakery samples made with Vallex's V-FOS, a prebiotic dietary fiber derived from natural sugarcane serving as a healthy, sustainable alternative to synthetic sweeteners. **Khon Kaen University Library's** booth provided a VR experience, allowing participants to explore a simulated exhibition room and create content in the metaverse, featuring images, videos, and various information.



MF 2024 EXHIBIT

One of the forum's highlights was an exhibition showcasing digital technologies and innovative solutions to sustainable development. Featuring development organizations, tech companies, and research institutions from the GMS, the exhibition offered a platform for exhibitors to present their innovations, tools, and initiatives to industry leaders, potential partners, investors, and experts.

LIST OF EXHIBITORS

GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

- Digital Economy Promotion Agency
- Geoinformatics and Space Technology Development Agency
- Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB)
- Foreign Economic Cooperation Centre (FECC) of the Ministry of Agriculture, China

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- Water and Energy for Food (WE4F) South and Southeast Asia Regional Innovation Hub
- Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (RAIN)

RESEARCH INSTITUTES

- Mitr Phol Innovation and Research Center
- Stockholm Environment Institute
- Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)

ACADEME

- Khon Kaen University
- Khon Kaen University Library
- Khon Kaen University Phenome Centre
- Faculty of Architecture Urban Design and Creative Arts, Mahasarakham University

INDUSTRY

- Taknet Systems (Thailand) Co., Ltd.
- Greenovator
- Esport Arena
- Khon Kaen City Development (KKTT) Co. Ltd.
- Infinitland Holding Co., Ltd.
- Listenfield Co., Ltd.
- Asia Oil and Herb Co., Ltd.
- Agrimomo
- CPS Agri. Co., Ltd.
- PPC Agrochemical Company Limited
- Fourthchem Trading Co., Ltd.

7 TERRAINS



BREAKOUT SESSIONS

As in its previous iterations, MI's Mekong Forum for 2024 has been a catalyst for discussions and new collaborative ideas shaping an inclusive digital future for the GMS. It sought to initiate the creation of a regional innovation strategy that aligns with ASEAN's digital and connectivity goals, and tailored to the diverse needs and ambitions of the GMS.

Toward this end, the Mekong Forum offered seven breakout sessions, called **Terrains**, where the core of the discussions took place. The terrains featured over 30 resource persons who delivered presentations on key aspects of DIT. Discussions were closely linked to MI's priority themes: agricultural development, trade and investment facilitation, sustainable energy, environment, and inclusion of women and youth. The scalability of DIT in the GMS, with an emphasis on sustainability beyond initial financing, was also a significant topic. Drawing from the presentations and discussions in each session, resource persons and participants collaborated to develop recommendations for the digital transformation of the GMS.

TERRAIN 1: REVOLUTIONIZING FOOD SYSTEMS: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN MEKONG'S AGRICULTURE SECTOR



<p>Ms. Dada Bacudo Advisor, ASEAN Climate Resilience Network (ASEAN-CRN)</p>	<p>Dr. Nur Azura Binti Adam Deputy Director for Programs, Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA)</p>	<p>Dr. Preesan Rakwatin Executive Vice President, Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA)</p>	<p>Ms. Pouchamarn Wongsanga Regional Component Leader, Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture Value Chain (ASEAN AgriTrade) - GIZ</p>	<p>Mr. Zhang Bin Deputy Division Director, Associate Researcher, Foreign Economic Cooperation Center, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, PRC</p>	<p>Mr. William Sparks (Terrain Moderator) Chief of Party, USDA Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network</p>
---	--	--	--	---	--



This session aimed to assess digital adoption in GMS agriculture, identify successful models and obstacles, and encourage dialogue on using digital technologies to improve climate resilience, food safety compliance, market access, and stakeholder collaboration.

The agriculture sector in the GMS faces challenges like climate change, environmental degradation, and urbanization. Digital transformation is seen as a solution to enhance productivity, resource efficiency, and market access, though barriers like infrastructure limitations, digital literacy gaps, and affordability issues hinder widespread adoption.

Ms. Dada Bacudo, represented by Dr. Margaret Yoovatana, highlighted the role of digital tools in enhancing climate resilience in agriculture, emphasizing the need for policy support, capacity building, and financial mechanisms to scale digital solutions.

Dr. Nur Azura Binti Adam, Deputy Director for Programs, Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA), discussed the ASEAN guidelines for digital transformation in the agri-food supply chain, focusing on enhancing food security, sustainability, and economic development through digital technologies.

Dr. Preesan Rakwatin, Vice President for Digital Agriculture Development and Promotion, Digital Economy Promotion Agency (DEPA), shared DEPA's efforts to modernize Thailand's agriculture through digital technologies. He talked about the DEPA Digital Transformation Fund, which introduced agricultural drones and automatic watering systems that led to the





reduction of labor and chemical exposure while conserving water in project sites. He also discussed the Tropicana Oil Smart Factory that used digital tools to optimize agricultural processes.

Ms. Pouchamarn Wongsanga, Regional Component Leader – ASEAN AgriTrade Project, Project Director, Agriculture & Food Cluster, GIZ Thailand, emphasized the role of international organizations in promoting digital agriculture, showcasing successful projects in ASEAN countries and recommending strategies for scaling and replicating these initiatives.

Mr. William Sparks, Chief of Party, USDA Thailand Regional Agriculture Innovation Network (RAIN), focused on strategies to bridge the digital divide for smallholder farmers in the GMS, including developing business models, incentivizing early adopters, and establishing digital linkages.

Ms. Zhang Bin, Deputy Division Director at the Manufacturing Automation and Robotics Academy, emphasized China's advancements in digital agriculture, supported by robust rural internet infrastructure and growing online agricultural sales. She highlighted pilot initiatives like the China-ASEAN Digital Agricultural Forum, and the Second World Expo on Digital Agriculture in Chengdu.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Education and Training*: Enhance access to education for farmers and youths, focusing on modern techniques, sustainability, and entrepreneurship through digital platforms.
- *Support for Agri-Tech Startups*: Encourage investment in youth-led agri-tech startups with incubation programs, mentorship, and networking opportunities.
- *Innovation Hubs*: Establish learning networks as innovation hubs to connect stakeholders for collaborative problem-solving and best practice sharing in agriculture.
- *Public-Private Partnerships*: Foster partnerships between government, private sector, international organizations, and technology providers to develop and finance tailored digital solutions for farmers.

TERRAIN 2: HARNESSING DIT FOR INCLUSIVE AND SECURE TRADE AND FINANCE IN THE GMS



<p>Mr. Ryosuke Fujoka Chief Representative The Association for Overseas Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Partnership (ACTS) and AEM-METI Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee (AMEICC)</p>	<p>Mr. Tanapat Vattanapakanchai Senior Manager, Strategy, ABeam Consulting (Thailand) Ltd.</p>	<p>Ms. Khanit Phatong Executive Advisor and Chief Information Officer Electronic Transaction Development Agency (ETDA), Thailand</p>	<p>Dr. Watcharas Leelawath (Terrain Moderator) Honorary Advisor Bolliger and Company Thailand</p>
---	---	---	--



With the increased cross-border trade and digital advancements in the finance sector, this session focused on utilizing digitalization to enhance efficiency, inclusivity, and sustainability in trade and finance, aligned with GMS-2030 and ASEAN frameworks.

Mr. Tanapat Vattanapakanchai, Senior Manager at Strategy, ABeam Consulting (Thailand) Ltd., explored key drivers of digital transformation using case studies from prominent Thai companies (e.g., WHA Group, Central Retail, True Corporation). He introduced a four-dimension framework for implementing digital change and a model for organizational digital transformation. He also discussed challenges like talent scarcity, policy instability, and infrastructure issues. He highlighted the impact of digital transformation on e-commerce in the GMS, citing companies like Shopee, Lazada, and Alibaba. He also emphasized ABeam Consulting's strategies for driving sustainability and organizational value.





Mr. Ryosuke Fujioka, Chief Representative of the Association for Overseas Technical Cooperation and Sustainable Partnership (AOTS) and AEM-METI Economic and Industrial Cooperation Committee (AMEICC), discussed the role of Japanese manufacturing firms in enhancing regional supply chains in the GMS. He emphasized the need for green transformation (GX) to maintain competitiveness and achieve carbon neutrality. He explored the relationship between GX and Digital Transformation (DX) for CO2 visualization in GMS SMEs. He also talked about how the Japanese government collaborates with local SMEs to implement GX strategies, sharing project details and implementation structure.

Ms. Khanit Phatong, Executive Advisor and Chief Information Officer at Electronic Transaction Development Agency (ETDA), Thailand, gave an overview of the evolving fintech landscape in the GMS, including rising mobile/internet penetration, supportive policies, and increased fintech investment. She identified key trends such as digital payments, remittances, lending, and insurtech, contributing to financial inclusion and economic sustainability. She addressed infrastructure challenges (e.g., limited internet connectivity, regulatory uncertainty) faced by fintech companies in the GMS. He also provided case studies of cross-border QR payments, e-Tax, digital ID, and PromptBiz, showcasing fintech's role in facilitating trade and economic growth.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Prioritize Business Objectives:* Technologies like Generative AI or green transformation strategies should support business goals and deliver tangible benefits.
- *Adopt Green and Digital Transformation:* Corporates in the Mekong Subregion should upgrade global supply chains, address CBAM and market access regulations, and support local SMEs' decarbonization efforts.
- *Support for Fintech:* Public sectors should improve infrastructure for digital transactions, reform legislation, and promote digital literacy to support fintech's role in transforming trade and building a sustainable economy.

TERRAIN 3 - POWERING THE FUTURE: TECH-DRIVEN ENERGY SOLUTIONS IN THE GMS



Mr. Ye Xuenong
Permanent Representative of China to UNESCAP

Ms. Yejin Ha
Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Mr. Beni Suryadi
Head of Power, Fossil Fuel, Alternative Energy and Storage Department; Acting Head of Sustainable and Renewable Energy Department, ASEAN Center for Energy

Mr. Andy Chun
Country General Manager
VERYWORDS (Cambodia)

Dr. Liu Chen
Acting Division Director of International Energy Consultancy Department, China Electric Power Planning & Engineering Institute (EPPEI)

Ms. Thanawadee Deetae
Head, New power Generation Development Planning Section, Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT)

Ms. Jian (Tina) Wang (Terrain Moderator)
Program Manager, Sustainable Energy and Environment, Mekong Institute



The breakout session opened with welcoming remarks from **Mr. Suriyan**, who emphasized the importance of regional cooperation and innovation in advancing a sustainable energy transition. He highlighted the role of smart grids and digital solutions in improving energy efficiency and promoting renewable energy across the region. Mr. Suriyan also aligned key initiatives like GMS-2030, the ASEAN Digital Integration Framework, and the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 with the session's goal of exploring cutting-edge solutions for a low-carbon future.

Mr. Ye Xuenong emphasized the importance of the session as part of a broader project, supported by the Chinese Government, aimed at advancing the energy transition towards low-carbon development in the region. He highlighted the urgent need to address challenges such as climate change, imbalanced energy supply and demand, and the rising costs of fossil fuels. Mr. Ye reiterated China's commitment to international collaboration on low-carbon energy through initiatives like the Belt and Road Energy Cooperation Partnership and the Global Development Initiative (GDI), and expressed China's readiness to deepen cooperation with Lancang-Mekong (LM) countries in achieving a sustainable, low-carbon future.





In her keynote address, **Ms. Yejin Ha** presented on "Technology-Driven Energy Solutions for the Acceleration of Energy Transition in the Greater Mekong Subregion." She reviewed the progress and challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7), stressing the need to bridge gaps in electricity access while improving the quality, reliability, and affordability of energy services. Ms. Yejin noted the slowing progress in energy efficiency since 2015, which has led to a regression in SDG 13 as greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise. She emphasized the role of technological innovations like smart grids, energy storage systems, blockchain, and artificial intelligence (AI) in driving the energy transition. To unlock the full potential of these technologies, she called for enabling policies, regional cooperation, and increased investment in digital infrastructure.

Mr. Beni Suryadi of the ASEAN Centre for Energy made a presentation about energy technology innovation, focusing on ASEAN's energy challenges, achieving renewable energy targets, integrating Variable Renewable Energy (VRE), and promoting grid flexibility, hydrogen, and investment in sustainable practices.

A panel discussion followed suit. Here, **Mr. Andy Chun** of VERYWORDS, Cambodia highlighted tech-driven energy solutions in Cambodia, focusing on e-mobility and infrastructure development. **Dr. Liu Chen** of EPPEI, China discussed VRE planning and integration in China, emphasizing the country's advancements in renewable energy and grid flexibility. Lastly, **Ms. Thanawadee Deetae** of EGAT, Thailand focused on enhancing system flexibility with advanced grid solutions and energy storage.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Financial Accessibility:* Develop incentives and promote public-private partnerships to encourage investment in renewable energy and infrastructure.
- *Regional Policies:* Strengthen regional policies, accelerate the development of a regional power grid, and create digital forums for knowledge sharing.
- *Smart Grid Adoption:* Invest in smart grid solutions to enhance grid efficiency, flexibility, and rural energy access.

TERRAIN 4 - INCLUSIVE DIGITAL SOCIETIES: ENGAGING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN ACCELERATING DIT ADOPTION IN THE GMS



Dr. Sizwile Khoza Research Fellow Stockholm Environment Institute - Asia Center	Ms. Rury Demsey Junior Project Officer ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)	Ms. Lina Maulidina Sabrina Senior Program Officer Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA)	Mr. Senjaya Mulia Founder ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO)	Mr. Veerawit Tianchainan Chief of Party USAID - WWF Mekong For the Future (MFF) World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)	Ms. Than Tha Aung Senior Program Coordinator Sustainable Energy and Environment Department Mekong Institute	Ms. Yupaporn Siribut (Terrain Moderator) Program Officer, Sustainable Energy and Environment Department Mekong Institute
--	---	---	---	--	--	--



Terrain 4 had six sessions that revolved around the use of digital technologies to promote inclusion and empowerment. The first session by **Ms. Rury Demsey** of the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific tackled the issue of gender digital divide, with men having higher internet usage globally. She shared about ITU initiatives like "Girls in ICT Day" and "Generation Connect" that promote digital skills among women and youth. She stressed the need for inclusive digital policies to support women's and youth's participation in the digital economy.

In Session 2, **Dr. Sizwile Khoza** (Stockholm Environment Institute – Asia Centre) focused on the importance of inclusive policies for marginalized groups, particularly in education and technology access. Dr. Sizwile discussed initiatives like SUMERNET 4 All and the Mekong Thought Leadership and Think Tanks Network (MTT) for sustainable development. Dr. Sizwile also highlighted the need for gender-responsive budgeting and inclusive policy-making.



TERRAIN 4 INCLUSIVE DIGITAL SOCIETIES: ENGAGING WOMEN AND YOUTH IN ACCELERATING DIT ADOPTION IN THE GMS

Pullman Khon Kaen Raja Orchid Hotel, Erawan 1 & 2 | July 31, 2024



Ms. Lina Maulidina Sabrina, Senior Program Officer at ERIA, highlighted the need for innovation to involve women, youth, and persons with disabilities. She addressed their demographic significance and the barriers they encounter, such as employment disparities. Ms. Lina talked about the potential of an inclusive digital economy, and identified the Digital Innovation and Sustainable Economy Centre (E-DISC) as a key initiative. She stressed the need for collaboration among governments, investors, and educational institutions to foster digital skills and supportive environments, calling for policies that empower marginalized groups in the digital economy.

The fourth session was about empowering youth in green entrepreneurship and leadership. **Mr. Senjaya Mulia** of the ASEAN Youth Organization highlighted the role of youth in ASEAN's digital innovation and inclusion efforts. He discussed AYO's initiatives, including digital literacy, entrepreneurial skills, and inclusive practices. He also stressed the importance of treating youth as equal partners in business and policy-making.

Mr. Veerawit Tianchainan (USAID - WWF Mekong For the Future), in his session, focused on environmental protection and sustainable development through digital tools and youth participation. He emphasized the significance of the Mekong River and the region's environmental challenges. He also highlighted the "Mekong For The Future" initiative for training youth in ecosystem monitoring and media production.

The final session was led by MI's **Ms. Than Tha Aung**, who addressed barriers to digital inclusion, including cultural and accessibility challenges. She stressed the importance of digital literacy, online safety, and economic opportunities through digital platforms. She also advocated for integrating gender and youth perspectives in technology development and policy-making.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Establish Digital Literacy Programs:* Empower women and youth through targeted digital literacy initiatives.
- *Promote Policy Advocacy for Inclusive Technology:* Encourage advocacy for policies that support equitable access to technology and the digital economy.
- *Foster Partnerships for Technological Innovation:* Develop a network to translate forum insights into practical, community-based projects.

TERRAIN 5 - ENHANCING GMS TOURISM THROUGH DIGITAL PATHWAYS



Ms. Pattamon Rungchavanont
 Head of Solutions Mapping,
 Accelerator Lab Thailand
 United Nations Development
 Programme (UNDP)

Mr. Steven Schipani
 Principal Tourism
 Industry Specialist, ADB

Mr. Souliyo Vongdala
 Co-founder and CEO
 of LOCA

**Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta
 (Terrain Moderator)**
 Director, Trade & Investment
 Facilitation (TIF) Department
 Mekong Institute



Terrain 5 was about how DIT could be used to address challenges in the tourism sector, promote sustainability, and ensure resilience and competitiveness, considering the economic value of tourism in the GMS, the impact of global disruptions like COVID-19, and the regional frameworks like the GMS-2030.

In her presentation, **Ms. Pattamon Rungchavanont** (UNDP) emphasized the importance of sustainable tourism in economic, social, and environmental development. She highlighted the use of digital tools to empower local communities in managing and benefiting from tourism. She discussed the role of social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) in showcasing local identities and co-creating tourism activities with visitors. She also stressed the importance of user-centered digital solutions for inclusive tourism, particularly for people with disabilities. She then mentioned the potential of AI to enhance accessibility and tailor tourism experiences.





Mr. Steven Schipani (ADB) addressed challenges in creating a smart tourism ecosystem, including access to finance, digital payments, and the digital divide. He proposed solutions like simplifying digital technologies for border crossings and providing SMEs with affordable finance and training. He emphasized the need for collaboration among experts and policymakers to regulate technology while fostering innovation. He also stressed the importance of investments to improve digital access and protect tourism assets.

Mr. Souliyo Vongdala (LOCA) highlighted the role of the private sector in promoting green mobility and SME involvement. He used LOCA's case study in Laos to illustrate services like transportation, EV leasing, and e-payment systems. He recommended establishing EV charging stations to boost local tourism and SME inclusion. He emphasized developing inclusive and user-friendly payment systems for international tourists, and advocated for using technology to enhance transparency, fairness, and safety in public transportation.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Enhance Digital and Social Media Marketing for Community-Based Tourism:* Build social media marketing capacity for local communities, and encourage user-generated content and co-create new tourism offerings.
- *Leverage Digital Technologies for Sustainable Tourism Development:* Implement digital technologies that prioritize user and community needs, use technology to preserve traditional knowledge and ensure cultural sensitivity.
- *Accelerate Investments and Provide Affordable Finance for SMEs:* Improve digital access and provide affordable finance, business advisory services, and skills training for SMEs.
- *Promote Sustainable Transportation to Boost Local Tourism:* Invest in greener transportation options, like EV charging stations, to support local businesses and environmentally sustainable travel.
- *Leverage Digital Technologies for an Enhanced Tourist Experience:* Improve the visibility and accessibility of local businesses through digital platforms, and ensure user-friendly payment options and enhance transportation safety and transparency.

TERRAIN 6 - DIGITIZING THE PATH TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIONS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



Prof. Dr. Wang Hua
Academic Director
and Professor
Zhejiang University

Mr. Ryosuke Miyashita
Deputy Director
Japan International
Cooperation Agency
(JICA)

Mr. Thanapon Piman
Senior Research
Fellow and Water
Resources
Cluster Lead
Stockholm
Environmental
Institute (SEI) Asia

**Mr. Suradech
Taweesaengsakulthai**
Chief Executive Officer
Cho Thavee Public
Company Limited

Dr. Dong Un Park
Research Fellow Office
of Sustainable
Innovation Policy
Research at the
Science and
Technology Policy
Institute (STPI)

Ms. Yejin Kim
Project Manager,
Republic of Korea
UN Office for South-
South Cooperation
Facility (Phase 3) /
P-Link

**Mr. Suriyan
Vichitkarn**
(Terrain Moderator)
Executive Director,
Mekong Institute



The discussion in Terrain 6, led by MI Executive Director **Mr. Suriyan**, focused on Digital Information Technology (DIT) in promoting environmental stewardship. DIT was highlighted for bridging the digital gap, supporting inclusive engagement, and advancing environmental sustainability through efficient data organization and resource optimization. Collaboration among stakeholders, minimizing carbon footprints, and adopting ESG practices were emphasized for scaling sustainable efforts. Leveraging DIT for more effective and inclusive environmental initiatives was underscored to achieve broader sustainability goals.

ADB Institute Dean **Mr. Tetsushi Sonobe** expressed regret for not attending a forum in person but highlighted efforts to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection for sustainable development. He emphasized initiatives like renewable energy and green finance, underlining the importance of sustainable management in the Mekong region. Sonobe also discussed digital solutions in city projects for sustainable development.

Mr. Daniel Wang presented on China's low-carbon strategy focusing on the transportation sector's impact on greenhouse gas emissions. He emphasized the need for innovative technologies and policies to achieve sustainable growth. Wang highlighted successful initiatives in urban areas, showcasing how targeted strategies can reduce emissions and improve air quality.





Mr. Ryosuke Miyashita discussed JICA's digital transformation efforts in development projects, highlighting the DX Office's role, key case studies from India, and a 5-year DX roadmap emphasizing digital infrastructure and data-driven innovation for growth and government support.

Mr. Suradech Taweesaengsakulthai discussed using digital solutions for sustainable smart cities, emphasizing urban livability and reducing carbon footprints. He presented the "KhonKaen Model" addressing economic disparities and outlined a 20-year plan for poverty reduction and equal access to opportunities in Khon Kaen.

Mr. Thanapon Piman showcased SUMERNET's use of digital solutions for sustainable development in the Mekong region, emphasizing the importance of inclusive technology access for local farmers, especially vulnerable groups like women and people with disabilities.

Mr. Dong Un Park and **Ms. Yejin Kim** discussed the collaboration between UNOSSC and STEPI on the "STI for Integrated Green Development" project. The project focuses on promoting sustainable practices through South-South and Triangular Cooperation, particularly addressing the Water-Energy-Food Nexus in the Mekong Region. Technical pilots in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam involve smart water management and AI-based systems for sustainable development in the lower Mekong basin.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Strengthen strategic partnerships with local stakeholders.* Foster active engagement of local counterparts - governments, academia, civil society, and private sector – to develop local ownership and capacity, and enable knowledge transfer for sustainable impact.
- *Establish a common goal and identify how technology can help achieve this.* Ensure that stakeholder objectives are aligned towards a common goal and identify how technology can facilitate the achievement of this goal. To do this, it is important to understand new technologies and know how they can be used to address development challenges.
- *Promote open data and data sharing between the public and private sector to support innovation.* Establish Digital Public Infrastructure/Goods (DPI/DPG) to effectively encourage private sector-led innovation and drive economic growth.
- *Conduct stakeholder mapping to ensure synergy among various initiatives.* If necessary, establish a working group to promote collaboration among partners and monitor implementation of projects.

TERRAIN 7 - REIMAGINING EDUCATION: EVOLVING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DIT



Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont
Centre Director
SEAMEO Regional
Centre for Higher
Education and
Development

Asst. Prof. Dr. Denpong Soodphakdee
Vice President for
Education and Digital
Khon Kaen University
(KKU)

Ms. Lilian Tan
E-Learning
Consultant
Asian Development
Bank Institute

Ms. Rika Yorozu
Programme
Specialist
UNESCO Bangkok

Mr. Prayuth Tugnsangob
Chief Technology
Officer (CTO), Huawei
Enterprise Business
Group for Thailand

Prof. Dr. Wanida Kanarkard
Vice Dean for
Research, Innovation,
and International
Affairs, Faculty of
Engineering, KKU

Asst. Prof. Dr. Parama Kwangmuang
Assistant Dean for
Innovation and
Enterprise, Faculty of
Education, KKU

Asst. Prof. Dr. Pornpisut Duangngern
Lecturer, Faculty of
Education
Udon Thani Rajabhat
University



Terrain 7 is focused on exploring the integration of digital and AI technologies into the education systems of the GMS. It covers the challenges and opportunities of adapting education to rapid digital, economic, and green transformations. Key discussions include the holistic transformation of education, the role of generative AI in universities, non-degree e-learning programs, and the importance of digital infrastructure. The sessions emphasize the need for lifelong learning, ethical AI usage, and addressing barriers such as the digital divide and technological proficiency, while highlighting the potential for innovative and scalable educational solutions.

In her talk, **Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont** emphasized the urgent need to adapt education systems to rapid digital, economic, and green transformations. Dr. Romyen said that a holistic transformation of education, focusing on lifelong learning and flexible pathways, is essential. The presentation introduced a regional approach for a common space in Southeast Asian higher education, promoting sustainable learning.

Dr. Denpong Soodphakdee discussed the opportunities and challenges of integrating generative AI in higher education. While AI offers potential for personalized learning and operational efficiency, concerns include academic integrity, intellectual property, and skill development. Khon Kaen University is proactively integrating AI through training and implementation in various processes.





Ms. Lilian Tan Li Jun highlighted ADBI's e-learning platform that offers demand-driven, tuition-free non-degree programs across Asia and the Pacific, focusing on capacity building in key areas. Despite challenges like technological proficiency and content customization, the platform provides scalable and flexible learning opportunities.

Ms. Rika Yorozu from UNESCO focused on initiatives like the Learning Coin project, which supports disadvantaged children through technology. The project shows success in enhancing literacy and promoting sustainability, though challenges like the digital divide and teacher digital competency persist.

Mr. Prayuth Tungsangob from Huawei emphasized the importance of advanced digital infrastructure in addressing the talent gap and supporting educational transformation. Huawei's initiatives aim to empower digital skills and promote smart learning environments, though challenges like the digital skills gap and infrastructural limitations remain.

Prof. Dr. Wanida Kanarkard discussed the potential of AI, particularly generative AI, to enhance education by offering personalized learning, automating tasks, and supporting research. Ethical considerations and responsible AI usage are crucial.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Parama Kwangmuang and **Asst. Prof. Dr. Pornpisut Duangngern** explored using AI in academic writing, emphasizing the need to maintain human creativity while leveraging AI efficiency.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Inclusive Policies:* Develop and implement policies addressing the ethical, privacy, and security aspects of DIT in education.
- *Digital Literacy:* Enhance digital literacy through comprehensive programs and continuous professional development.
- *Digital Infrastructure:* Invest in expanding digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas.
- *Collaborative Initiatives:* Promote partnerships between educational institutions, governments, and the private sector to share resources and develop innovative solutions.



RECEPTION DINNER

In between the two-day program, MI treated Mekong Forum participants to a reception dinner that put a spotlight on musical performances including a metaverse showcase set to the vibrant tunes of modernized Mo Lam folk music and dance. **Ms. Anusara Tanpitak**, MI's Communication and Knowledge Management Unit Manager and overall event lead for MF 2024, hosted the gathering.

Formally welcoming participants to the reception dinner, **H.E. Mr. Chea Chantum**, MI Council Chair and Secretary-General of Cambodia's General Secretariat for Population and Development at the Ministry of Planning, thanked and congratulated everyone for the exceptional work. Meanwhile, **Dr. Narongchai** led a toast to commemorate the 10th edition of the Mekong Forum and celebrate the success of this year's event.





FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

The Mekong Forum also saw the signing of strategic partnerships with three academic institutions – Khon Kaen University’s College of Local Administration, Chiang Mai University’s Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, and Southwest Forestry University – to foster academic and research collaboration, exchange personnel including scholars and faculty, and share information and publications to enhance innovation. The agreements include organizing joint workshops and conferences, which are expected to significantly contribute to digital transformation and smart city aspirations of GMS stakeholders.



The signing ceremonies were facilitated by MI’s External Relations and Protocol Manager, **Ms. Pornwilai Pumira**.



IN PHOTOS: MI Executive Director, Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, signs separate memoranda of agreement (MOU) with three academic institutions, including [from left to right] (i) Chiang Mai University Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, (ii) Khon Kaen University College of Local Administration, and (iii) Southwest Forestry University.



CLOSING PLENARY

The closing plenary started with the presentation of the actionable recommendations developed by the participants of each Terrain. A representative from each of the seven Terrains discussed their recommendations. Key recommendations included developing digital literacy programs, particularly for women and youth, with hands-on training and access to digital tools. Investing in digital infrastructure to improve access, reliability, and affordability in underserved areas was emphasized. The importance of engaging local stakeholders for ownership and capacity development was highlighted, alongside enhancing digital access and support for SMEs through affordable finance, business advisory services, and skills training for digital resource utilization. Strengthening strategic partnerships and knowledge transfer was identified as crucial for the advancement of the region's digital economy and community.

In Conversation: Synthesis and Ways Forward

The closing plenary started with the presentation of the actionable recommendations developed by the participants of each Terrain. A representative from each of the seven Terrains discussed their recommendations. Key recommendations included developing digital literacy programs, particularly for women and youth, with hands-on training and access to digital tools. Investing in digital infrastructure to improve access, reliability, and affordability in underserved areas was emphasized. The importance of engaging local stakeholders for ownership and capacity development was highlighted, alongside enhancing digital access and support for SMEs through affordable finance, business advisory services, and skills training for digital resource utilization. Strengthening strategic partnerships and knowledge transfer was identified as crucial for the advancement of the region's digital economy and community.

"The next 12 months will focus on creating an ecosystem that prioritizes human capital, policy, and partnerships to foster understanding and knowledge. Partnerships must aim for results and action, not just sharing experiences. Stakeholders, who are not just beneficiaries but potential partners, should be engaged to define strategic advantages. While DIT infrastructure investment should start with the government, it should later be expanded by the private sector," Mr. Suriyan told Mr. Panu.

Closing Remarks

Extending his congratulations to the organizers, MI Council Member and China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), **Mr. Ye Xuenong**, said in his closing remarks that the Mekong Forum has "provided an invaluable opportunity for participants to engage in constructive dialogue on the transformative role of digital innovation technologies in key areas including food, trade, and energy." He added that the event facilitated the sharing of practical experiences and the exchange of ideas on future developments. "This Forum adds new content, injects new vitality, and makes new contributions to digital innovation cooperation in our region... This is a promising development that has the potential to promote inclusive growth and sustainable development."

In his closing remarks, MI Executive Director, **Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn**, expressed his appreciation for the success of the Mekong Forum. He emphasized the forum's collaborative nature, recalling how "it turned out that partners see this as a common platform, and it's very encouraging." Mr. Suriyan highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary efforts in scaling DIT within the GMS. He expressed hope that the discussions from the two-day event would lead to "actions and results."

Acknowledging the various groups that played pivotal roles in the forum, Suriyan invited them to stand, recalling how the desire for greater event ownership among partners has brought all collaborators to "a next level of working together." He recognized the contributions of the keynote and terrain speakers, development partners, and the technical and logistics teams, noting that some participants stood up more than once, reflecting their multiple roles in the partnership. Mr. Suriyan concluded his remarks by thanking the sponsors and co-hosts, particularly China, and urged everyone to "continue this partnership for results."



MR. YE XUENONG
MI Council Member and
China's Permanent Representative to the
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for
Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)



MR. SURIYAN VICHITLEKARN
Executive Director
Mekong Institute



COMMUNICATIONS

For the 10th edition of the Mekong Forum, MI developed a comprehensive suite of communications materials to ensure the smooth execution of the event and facilitate effective participation by attendees. These materials were designed to provide clear information on the program's content, event logistics, and specific activities. Key resources included the event [concept note](#), which outlined the forum's objectives and thematic focus, [presentation digests](#), summarizing key insights from speakers to enhance engagement and knowledge-sharing, the participants' [handbook](#), offering detailed instructions for attendees, and an [exhibitor's guide](#) for exhibit logistics and preparations.

In addition to written materials, MI produced several videos that enriched the event experience. Among these was a special [tribute video](#), commemorating the 10th edition of the Mekong Forum and reflecting on its evolution since its inception in 2011. This video celebrated the milestones achieved over the past decade, highlighting key moments, partnerships, and the forum's role in shaping regional dialogue on sustainable development.

In the same manner, these multimedia elements played a crucial role in setting the tone of the reception and networking dinner, inspiring participants, and creating a shared sense of achievement and progress.

All materials, including speakers' presentations, photos, and press releases are accessible at www.mekonginstitute.org/mekong-forum-2024/. Videos are available on a [playlist](#) at MI's YouTube channel, while a livestream recording of the [opening plenary](#) and [tech demonstration](#) is posted on MI's Facebook page.



Audience Reach

Mekong Forum 2024 is well-documented through media coverage and partners' social media posts. Aside from participants who attended the event in person, other stakeholders also tuned in via Facebook livestream.

The following summarizes all posts and media stories published about Mekong Forum 2024. Links to the specific posts and stories are available for each item.

Mekong Forum 2024					
Type of Media	Date	Remark	Advertising Value (THB)	PR Value (THB)	Potential Reach
FB KKU Library	Jul 31, 2024	TH	10,000	30,000	32,697
WS KKU	Aug 01, 2024	TH	77,980	233,940	408,372
FB NU-KKU	Aug 01, 2024	TH	10,000	30,000	43,548
FB COLA-KKU	Aug 01, 2024	TH	10,000	30,000	13,484
FB PS-CMU	Aug 05, 2024	TH	10,000	30,000	15,784
FB LhaoKhaoKCC	Aug 06, 2024	TH	5,000	15,000	n/a
FB Tiksnews	Aug 06, 2024	TH	5,000	15,000	n/a
FB Morkhao	Aug 06, 2024	TH	5,000	15,000	n/a
WS DailyNews	Aug 06, 2024	TH	101,427	304,281	1,838,717
FB siengphupan	Aug 06, 2024	TH	20,000	60,000	112,232
WS mfa-th	Aug 07, 2024	TH	69,350	208,050	261,809
YT Makpro News	Aug 07, 2024	TH	5,000	15,000	n/a
WS Makpro News	Aug 07, 2024	TH	5,000	15,000	n/a
WS mfa-th	Aug 07, 2024	ENG	69,350	208,050	261,809
WS radiokhonkaen	Aug 07, 2024	TH	81,221	243,663	486,606
WS RYT9	Aug 07, 2024	TH	76,367	229,101	375,015
FB UNDP-TH	Aug 13, 2024	TH	10,000	30,000	45,359
WS ERIA	Aug 20, 2024	ENG	5,000	15,000	n/a
WS siengphupan	Aug 20, 2024	TH	5,000	15,000	n/a
WS Kkuic	Aug 23, 2024	ENG	77,980	233,940	408,372
FB ThailandFriendlyDesignExpo	Aug 26, 2024	TH	10,000	30,000	27,757

ABOUT MEKONG INSTITUTE

Mekong Institute (MI), an intergovernmental organization owned and operated by the six countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yunnan province and Guangxi Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China), promotes regional cooperation and integration through capacity development programs and projects in three thematic areas namely, Agricultural Development and Commercialization, Trade and Investment Facilitation, and Sustainable Energy and Environment.

ADDRESS

123 Mittraphap Rd., Muang District, Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand
Tel: + 66 (0) 4320 2411
information@mekonginstitute.org

CONNECT WITH US

