

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS JOINT STATEMENT AT EMM4

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On behalf of RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests, Conservation International, Fauna & Flora International, Global Environmental Institute, Global Footprint Network, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, TRAFFIC

We acknowledge the following:

1. The natural capital of the GMS – and the ecosystem services it supports, as well as its inter-linkages with social and human capital – is a fundamental underpinning of the region's long term economic performance.
2. With increasing economic growth and trade as well as population rise in the Mekong region, the demand for natural resources will continue to grow. This intensifying need for these resources, combined with their decreasing availability requires us to come up with solutions that go beyond the “business as usual” development model.
3. Together, the GMS countries must institute stewardship measures and practices if the natural assets and rich biodiversity unique to this region are to be maintained. We believe that this can be achieved by attributing value to natural capital, addressing current market failures and by addressing the drivers of natural capital degradation inherent in the current growth model. Lasting and sustainable development depends on advancing human well-being while operating within nature's resource budget in an equitable manner.

As development partners, we are committed to support the key actors in the Mekong countries - including public and private sector – to this end and we would therefore emphasize the need to:

4. **Undertake** comprehensive assessments of natural capital and the full range of ecosystem services it provides across the whole region. We promote investments in the natural capital of the GMS, but urge you also to provide solutions as to how investments in the “brown” sectors can positively contribute to conserve natural capital. Whilst these solutions will require extra financial resources in the short term, acting now will ensure that the region's economic sustainability and longevity is safeguarded. It is therefore key that natural capital is mapped out and properly valued (both monetary and non-monetary) so the necessary information on natural capital is available to help decision-makers make more informed decisions towards reaching environmental, social and economic goals.
5. **Mainstream** natural capital values into development planning and projects, public policy frameworks and indicators of progress that go beyond traditional economic indicators are critical actions for governments, development partners and the private sector.
6. **Welcome the collective drive for *quality growth*** reflecting not only economic growth but also environmental sustainability and improved social well-being.
7. **Identify RIF projects that can help build a success model for sustainable infrastructure development:** We suggest the use of natural capital assessments to further inform key infrastructure related investments that may affect the GMS priority landscapes specifically and which would inform the RIF implementation plan overall. We also urge you to engage more effectively and efficiently with key development sectors (transport, energy, urban development, agriculture, tourism) to ensure that these new investments are inclusive and sustainable, and they protect and enhance the sub-region's natural capital.
8. **Work together to strengthen the decision support tools and information available that enable prioritization and decisions about the best location of infrastructure projects:** Whilst trade-offs are inevitable - we need to ensure we have the right data, scenarios and criteria to find the best options.
9. **Encourage Interstate GMS cooperation to manage shared natural resources:** Trans-boundary protected areas, shared watercourses, coastal fisheries all need strong cooperation if resources are to be sustainably managed to the benefit of all. Regional cooperation is also needed in mitigating the environmental impacts of regional infrastructure investments. We therefore urge the EMM, the need for the GMS states to increase its coordination with other regional bodies - especially the other GMS sector working groups, ASEAN and MRC - and multilateral environmental agreements (e.g. CBD, CITES and CMS) to which GMS states are members, to further such ends.