



BRIDGING BORDERS: GMS Connectivity for Inclusivity and Sustainability

July 24-25, 2019

Pullman Hotel,
Khon Kaen, Thailand



Modern connectivity is proving to be a game-changer.

Indeed, it could not be any more significant in the Greater Mekong Sub-region where the six countries of Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam are interconnected.

Advances in the freight and logistics sector have been integral in improving cross-border trade in the region. Between 2002 and 2011, movement of freight had increased by three-fourths while exports of goods had tripled. Infrastructural developments – from the construction of the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridges to the ongoing railway project connecting Yunnan and Vientiane – have brought in the promise of convenience, ease and speed in the movement of people and goods across provinces and countries. Policy and regulatory initiatives like the Cross-Border Trade Agreement are much-needed complementary mechanisms to resolve constraints in customs operations, border crossings and transit traffic, among many other things.

As developments in the sector continue to gain momentum, it becomes paramount to turn the conversation to the more crucial question: **How do we leverage on these developments to strengthen regional connectivity and promote broader inclusiveness?**

Such a conversation requires us to draw focus on the challenges that must be overcome. Beyond resource-related constraints that impact the quality of logistics infrastructure, a central concern for the region is the need for a strong logistics network that will guide cooperation in cross-border transport and trade. At the same time, it is imperative to inquire into solutions and opportunities that can be tapped particularly digital technology.

This conversation also becomes doubly relevant as Thailand assumes the chairmanship of the ASEAN this year. Bringing to focus the advancement of partnerships for sustainability, Thailand's Chairman places great importance on enhancing connectivity across the region. Rightly so, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025 identifies "seamless logistics" as one of its strategic objectives.

Mekong Forum 2019 with the theme **Bridging Borders: GMS Connectivity for Inclusivity and Sustainability** aspires to serve as a timely and critical platform for exploring ideas surrounding the subject.

Discussions in this year's Mekong Forum aim to *broaden awareness on the capacity needs of the region's connectivity network; expound on the critical infrastructures and legal frameworks to support trade flow in the GMS; and share ideas on the many ways digital technology can uplevel the region's logistics industry.*

Drawing on our focus on connectivity, Mekong Forum 2019 also features a business matching event to serve as a specially-designed platform for logistics service providers and enterprises in the logistics sector to exchange business insights and practices and grow their connections. In this way, Mekong Forum 2019 will serve to be a concrete step forward in supporting one of the key messages of this year's ASEAN Chairmanship – 'connecting the connectivities.'





WHAT IS THE MEKONG FORUM

Initiated by **Mekong Institute**, an intergovernmental organization in the **GMS**, the Mekong Forum:

- brings together opinion leaders to discuss the most pressing issues facing the GMS;
- is an annual gathering in Khon Kaen, one of the major cities in the northeast of Thailand;
- engages multiple stakeholders in collaborative efforts to shape the development agenda of the region; and
- serves as a platform for interaction, dialogue and networking among scholars, business and government leaders, and development experts and practitioners.



Mekong Forum has engaged multi-level and multi-sectoral discussions on topics such as narrowing the development disparities in the region and ASEAN; modernization of the GMS, and the impacts of the new geo-economics on the Mekong countries. Last year's Mekong Forum, the sixth organized since 2011, tackled the role of innovation and regional cooperation in driving forward regional competitiveness and connectivity.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

Members of the GMS countries, development practitioners, stakeholders, and executives or senior officials of development organizations, particularly those working at the regional (GMS/ASEAN) level are highly encouraged to join.

The forum also welcomes participants from government/intergovernmental, non-government/civil society, private and non-profit development organizations, research institutes, the academe, as well as support agencies within the region.



WHAT TO EXPECT

The forum offers:

- action-oriented ideas and proposed programs, including initiatives for the further development of the GMS; and
- a network of participants engaged in and/or knowledgeable in development cooperation and technological innovations.





DATE & VENUE

Mekong Forum 2019 will be held on July 24, 2019
at Pullman Hotel, Khon Kaen, Thailand.



REGISTRATION

To register for the Forum, please visit the Mekong Forum
website.

To join the Business Matching event, please refer to the
attached for detailed instructions



COST

Forum Participation

Participants to the Forum discussions are expected to shoulder
all expenses related to their international and domestic travel
and accommodation. MI will provide meals (coffee breaks and
lunch) during the event.

Expenses of invited speakers and panelists will be shouldered
by MI.



CONTACT

For more information, please get in touch with:

Ms. Pornwilai Pumira

External Relations Manager
Mekong Institute

Tel: + 66 (0) 43 202 268-9 ext 1102

Fax: 043 204 043

Email: pornwilai@mekonginstitute.org



PROGRAM SCHEDULE AND AGENDA

July 23

18:30 – 21:30 Reception Cocktails

July 24

08:30 – 09:00 Registration

09:00 – 09:10

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director, Mekong Institute

09:10 – 09:20

Opening Remarks

Ms. Pattarat Hongtong, Director General, Thailand International Cooperation Agency;
Chairman, MI Council

09:20 – 09:30

TCEB representative

H.E. Ambassador Noh Kwang-il, Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Kingdom of Thailand

09:30 – 09:45

Keynote Address I:

Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chairman, Mekong Institute Steering Committee

09:45 – 10:00

Keynote Address II:

Prof. Dr. Naoyuki Yoshino, Dean/Chief Executive Officer, ADB Institute (ADBI)

10:00 – 10:30

Group Photo, Refreshments and Networking

10:30 – 12:00

Session I: Boosting border trade with streamlined frameworks

The ultimate objective of a seamless logistics sector is an efficient supply chain that drives forward the region's economic growth. This session will tackle issues concerning infrastructural and legal frameworks that are vital to enabling an environment conducive to cross-border trade.

Moderator: Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta, Director, Trade and Investment Facilitation Department

12:00 – 13:00

Networking Lunch

13:00 – 15:00

Session II: Linking logic with logistics capacities

A strong technical knowledge and resource base are integral in building a robust and agile logistics network. This session will expound on the capacity building needs of the region's logistics industries (freight and transport, maritime and airways) and thereby offer a guidepost for policy, human resource and infrastructural interventions.

Moderator: Ms. Maria Theresa Medialdia, Director, Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department

15:00 – 15:30

Refreshments



PROGRAM SCHEDULE AND AGENDA

15:30 – 17:00

Session III: Transforming logistics processes with digital tech

Digital technologies offer immense potentials for the GMS Logistics sector to fully become a dynamic driver of regional connectivity, bridging the Mekong countries physically and virtually. This session will discuss ways by which logistics industries – freight and transport, maritime and airways – are transforming the way they do things through digital technology.

Moderator: Mr. Sudam Pawar, Director, Innovation and Technological Connectivity Department

17:00 – 17:30

Synthesis and Way Forward

Dr. Watcharas Leelawath, Executive Director, Mekong Institute

July 25

09:00 – 11:00

Side event 1:

GMS Freight Transport Association (FRETA) Meeting

**By invitation only*

09:00 – 12:00

Business Matching*

The business matching event will gather a selected number of logistics service providers, freight and transport companies, and other enterprises working in logistics in Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The business matching session will offer these companies an opportunity to exchange business information and discuss possible areas for collaboration.

**By application; see attachment for more details*

09:00 – 11:00

Side event 2:

Dissemination Workshop – Trade Facilitation Office (TFO), Canada

The Trade Facilitation Office Canada invites policymakers, academics and members of the private sector to a dissemination workshop of TFO's initiative and projects directed at enabling better trade opportunities and creating a conducive market environment for agro-food enterprises in the Mekong countries.

11:00 – 12:30

Side event 3:

Seminar on Water Infrastructure Challenges in Mekong Region – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

The OECD Development Centre, together with Mekong Institute and ADBI, is presenting a new multi-year collaboration initiative on water infrastructure in the Mekong region and the potentials of maritime shipping and private financing on water supply.

12:00

Networking Lunch

