



# 12<sup>th</sup>

22 NOVEMBER 2021

**GMS ECONOMIC  
CORRIDORS FORUM  
VIET NAM 2021**

## **GMS Economic Corridors' Forum Looks Toward Vital Economic Recovery and Sustained Growth**

(Beijing, 22 November 2021) The 12th Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Corridors Forum (ECF-12) was held on 22 November 2021 under the theme “Enhancing Connectivity, Competitiveness, and Community Along the GMS Economic Corridors: Vital Means Toward Economic Recovery and Sustained Growth.” The Government of Viet Nam hosted the Forum.

ECF is a critical platform for crystallizing the thinking and experiences of GMS member countries on spatial development. It highlights successes and potential areas for growth in economic corridor connectivity, regional economic integration, and safe and sustainable community-development. ECF facilitates valuable discussions aimed at strengthening GMS cooperation.

“While the theme of this forum underlines the importance of the 3Cs approach of the GMS as the main pillars for sub-regional development, it also reflects some of the priorities defined under the newly endorsed strategic framework for the GMS Program, GMS Strategic Framework 2030 (GMS-2030), as well as the GMS COVID-19 response and recovery plan,” said Dr. Pham Hoang Mai, Director General, Foreign Economic Relations Department, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Viet Nam.

Mr. CHEN Ning, Deputy Director General, Department of Internal trade and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China, on behalf of the next host of ECF extended a welcome to all GMS countries and hoped to meet face to face in 2022.

### **Connectivity: Software Supporting Economic Corridors**

Sessions under “connectivity” focused on software supporting economic corridors in the GMS. The Forum discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cross-border trade between GMS countries and the GMS Cross Border Transport Facilitation Agreement (CBTA) Early Harvest implementation, underscoring the need for a concerted subregional effort to set the Early Harvest back on track and refresh the vision of a subregional free market for transport services envisaged under the CBTA.

The preliminary findings of the ongoing scoping study on *Enhancing Trade and Investment facilitation and Liberalization: Collaboration through the GMS Program* emphasized “quick wins” to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and jumpstart the recovery process by promoting digitalization, improving business climate, capacity building to maximize free trade agreements, and strengthening institutional mechanisms, while keeping a steady eye on longer-term strategic development.

Participants also discussed recent activities of the GMS E-Commerce Platform and deliberated on ways to strengthen and enhance its reach and effectiveness.

### **Competitiveness: Role of Cities and Local Governments in the Development of Economic Corridors**

Sessions under “competitiveness” focused on the role of local governments and cities in the development of economic corridors. The GMS Governors’ Forum will be reinvigorated and local governments’ engagement in GMS economic corridor development will be





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further strengthened under the mandate included in the GMS-2030 to make the GMS an open platform. This will foster more effective multisector and spatial coordination that accounts for the diverse interests of stakeholders, including the private sector, in each country. The GMS Program will also support corridor-specific or bilateral forums where provincial governors and the local private sector have common interests.

The results of the study, [\*The Greater Mekong Subregion 2030 and Beyond: Integration, Upgrading, Cities, and Connectivity\*](#), were presented at the Forum. GMS countries will continue to see a significant increase in urbanization, and making the most of its benefits necessitates managing the city to be an engine of growth from the perspective of individual cities that span both individual economies and the GMS as a whole. Policymakers are urged to pay attention to factors that underpin how efficiently the city system operates, such as the state of transportation and housing, and better connect GMS cities to each other.

### **Community: Labor Migration and Gender Equality**

Sessions under “community” tackled labor migration and gender equality. The United Nations International Organization for Migration delivered a presentation on “Integrating Human Mobility into Cross-Border Trade, Trade Facilitation, and Border Management during COVID-19.” Recommendations at the policy- and community- levels and at points of entry to promote safe and regular migration along the GMS economic corridors amid the pandemic were discussed at the Forum.

The presentation on how to improve gender equality and social inclusion in the GMS economic corridors discussed the gender strategy being developed by the GMS Program to mainstream gender across GMS operations—including the promotion of gender-responsive practices on economic corridor development. Women’s full participation in economic corridor development, as well as greater inclusion of vulnerable groups, will benefit the subregion economically and socially.

The meeting was attended by GMS Senior Officials, including senior officers from relevant Ministries and agencies of the GMS countries, the GMS Business Council, GMS Freight Transport Association, the Greater Mekong Railway Association, the Mekong Institute, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Secretariat, private sector organizations and development partners.

### **About the GMS Program**

Since its inception in 1992, the GMS Program has mobilized \$27.7 billion in financing to support 109 cross-cutting investment and 230 technical assistance projects. The GMS Program has helped enhance connectivity in the subregion by helping build close to 12,000 kilometers (km) of new or upgraded roads and nearly 700 km of railway lines. It has also helped provide electricity access to about 150,000 new households by supporting installation of nearly 3,000 megawatts of electricity and over 2,600 km of transmission and distribution lines.

