The 1st International Conference
“Strengthening Partnership among Academic and Development Institutions: New Dimensions of Social, Cultural and Economic Cooperation in the Upper Greater Mekong Sub-region”
16-18 February 2006
Chiangrai province, Thailand

The International Conference entitled Strengthening Partnership among Academic and Development Institutions: New Dimensions of Social, Culture, and Economic Cooperation in the Upper Greater Mekong Sub-region was undertaken in collaboration with both the financial and academic support of UNESCO, FAO, UNFPA, SEAMEO-RIHED, Japan Foundation, Bangkok, National Research Council’s Economic Branch and the Commission on Higher Education. The Conference was held during 16-18 February 2006 with 150 participants comprising researchers, development workers and policy makers from Cambodia, Philippines, Nepal, Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Japan, Sri Lanka, China and Thailand.

The papers presented had reflected the realistic situations of the changing society in the GMS countries. Today, serious problems are still seriously affected the life of the local population. It is apparent that girls and women of the minority tribes who migrate to other countries for an improved way of life due to political conflicts and seeking better opportunities have been suffering the ills of social injustice. Furthermore environmental destruction on a scale of uncertain proportions has occurred. The overall picture of this Sub-region is quite grim. There exist serious problems in the area of human resources, degradation of the natural resources, depletion of forest areas and water resources. Government policies within the Sub-region have yet to find ways to successfully regulate effective trading mechanism of cooperation between governments at the national and regional levels. Although there has been some success, there is still a gap concerning trade investments, social and environment awareness, mobilizing resources and building stronger partnership.

The meeting announced for a declaration of cooperation to strengthen partnership in economic, social and cultural development in order to develop the “Mechanism for Cooperation and Strengthen Partnership with International Organizations and Academic Institutions”.

The meeting agreed that developing partnerships are important for security and stability. Partnership can eradicate poverty, problems of human rights abuse and inequality of ethnic groups as well as safeguarding political conflicts. Natural resources and environmental degradation can be managed. Partnership can build peacefulness and a harmonious living within the region.
The International Organizations in particular UNESCO, FAO and UNFPA whose organizations work through more than 100 countries have developed programs of action within Asia – Pacific region and GMS countries. These organizations have expressed desire to provide financial support – to reach the Millennium Development Goals, since resources are surely needed to expand public services, including health care, education and to reduce poverty. An understanding of basic problems at the grass roots level and developing a strategy are essential for achievement. This proposed assistance, of course, within the framework of the existing budget. UNESCO has supported programs and activities that promote learning, social reform, justice and human dignity. FAO is involved in agriculture restructuring under changing market and existing trade conditions, natural resource conservation, strengthening bio-security for providing food security and poverty reduction for all farmers. FAO has worked through collaborated efforts with other UN organizations and development agencies such as Asian Development Bank, ASEAN and the Center of Integrated Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific as well as Civil Society Organizations to increase entrepreneur potentiality in basic investment, market development and information system.

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