



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

*Second Regional Stakeholder Forum on
the Pak Beng Hydropower Project
5th May 2017, Vientiane, Lao PDR*

Opening remarks

by

H.E. Monemany NHOYBOUAKONG

Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Environment
Vice Chairperson of Lao National Mekong Committee
Alternate Member of the MRC Council for Lao PDR

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates of MRC Member Countries, Development Partners,
International Organizations, Civil Societies, Research Institutes and Private-
Sector Partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you, Dr. Phan, for your welcoming remarks.

It is indeed my great honor and pleasure, on behalf of the Lao National Committee, to make these opening remarks at this Second Regional Stakeholder Forum on the Pak Beng Hydropower Project, and to be part of this process of broader stakeholder engagement.

A small, landlocked and mountainous country with steep mountain slopes, Lao PDR is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. Our country has been exposed to more frequent and severe natural disasters. Studies reveal that Laos faces the highest 100-Year Probable Maximum Loss Relative to GDP, with 100-Year Losses as high as 11.7 percent of National GDP, and natural disasters damage costs estimated at between 2.8 and 3.6 percent of National GDP.

The Lao PDR has placed great emphasis on inclusive, green and sustainable economic growth, being more resilient to the risks of natural disasters and climate change, and readiness to cope with these fatal impacts. Despite tremendous challenges, the Lao

PDR reiterates its strong commitment to the effective realization of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and the fight against the global warming.

This aim is clearly stipulated in our 2030 Vision, the 2025 Strategy, the objectives of our 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, our National Indicative Plan and our Nationally Intended Contribution on the Climate Change.

By the year 2020, the five components of the Mekong Sub-River Basin will be managed with the IWRM approach, 70 percent of the country's land will have forest cover, 90 percent of the Lao rural households will have electricity, hydropower exports will expand to enable neighboring countries to grow in a more sustained way with clean and renewable energy. As part of this utmost endeavor, Laos will continue to contribute 41 percent of the flow of our mighty Mekong River and the richness of its biological diversity resources.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The six-month Prior Consultation process for the Pak Beng Hydropower Project kicked off on 20 December 2016. In February 2017, we welcomed and participated in the First Regional Stakeholder Forum in Luang Prabang, to hear and discuss the details of the proposed Pak Beng project. At that time, project staff presented the results of many years of comprehensive studies that led to the initial design and operating rules for the project.

We remain open to your concerns, comments, questions and suggestions. We welcome the recommendations that will emerge from this Stakeholder Forum, and from the technical review of the detailed design and implementation. As was the case with the Xayaburi and Don Sahong consultations, we will remain open to your input even after conclusion of the required six-month review period. We call this “Post Consultation.” It means we will listen to your concerns without any time limit or deadline. If there is merit, we will act on it.

Some of you may recall that as part of our ongoing commitment to transparency around hydropower development on the Mekong River, we organized field trips to Xayaburi and Don Sahong. At Xayaburi, we made it possible for stakeholders to see for themselves the significant modifications the Lao PDR and the developer are making to ensure fish migration, sediment flushing, and freedom of navigation.

These measures taken in response to the MRC prior consultation process, required substantial additional investment, which we undertook in the spirit of Mekong cooperation and best practices.

The Lao PDR remains committed to this transparent approach in connection with the proposed Pak Beng Hydropower Project. Should you wish to monitor the progress at Pak Beng, the Lao Government stands ready to facilitate your visit.

Be assured that Lao PDR takes stakeholder participation seriously and remains committed to undergoing the consultation process for all mainstream hydropower projects. We reiterate our determination to balance stakeholders' and Member Countries' concerns, with national development and regional energy needs.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to all Member Countries for their continuous support of our Country Green Development program and to our Development Partners for their relentless assistance to our MRC activities. We also recognize the International Organizations and Civil Societies for their valuable comments. Finally I extend my gratitude to the Mekong River Commission Secretariat for the excellent arrangements of this Stakeholder Forum.

May I take this opportunity to declare our Meeting open.
I wish all you a productive forum with fruitful outcomes.

Khob Chai Lai Lai
Thank you very much.