Forum Conclusion

Second Mekong Climate Change Forum
Adaptation to Climate Change in the Transboundary Context

6 - 8 October 2014
Siem Reap, Kingdom of Cambodia

Background and Rationale

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) held the 1st Mekong Climate Change Forum in February 2009 in Bangkok, Thailand, with an overall conclusion on the commitment for the organisation to continue to facilitate the dialogue and coordination efforts related to climate change in the Mekong River Basin. The 2nd Mekong Climate Change Forum entitled Adaptation to Climate Change in the Transboundary Context was held by the MRC with financial support from its Development Partners and with the main focus on the status of climate change and adaptation as well as the adaptation strategies and action plans in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB).

One hundred and eighty participants, including government officials, academics, experts as well as representatives from international river basin organisations, the Development Partners, NGOs, civil society and the private sector, gathered for the three-day meeting on 6 – 8 October 2014 in Siem Reap, Cambodia, to share and exchange their knowledge, experience and progress in undertaking actions to adapt to the changing climate. Particular attention was given to initiatives dealing with transboundary effects of climate change. The Forum provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange ideas on how to connect national and transboundary adaptation strategies, and how to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of adaptation actions at both national and transboundary levels.

The Forum explored the following topics in keynote speeches, parallel and plenary sessions and panel discussions:

- The state of knowledge on climate change and its impacts as well as vulnerability of the environment and human well-being in the Lower Mekong Basin;
- Climate change adaptation in the Lower Mekong Basin: Policies, strategies and actions on the ground;
- Transboundary adaptation needs, approaches and challenges in the Lower Mekong Basin; and,
- Possible synergy between the national and transboundary adaptation strategies.

Outcomes of the Forum

1. Existing analyses by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the MRC and its Member Countries on climate change indicators in Asia, in particular in the LMB, reveal that climate change is already detectable in measured meteorological
data. Increasing temperatures and sea level rises are undisputed. The results of the IPCC 5th Assessment Report and of modelling approaches for the LMB for the future climate were presented.

2. The impacts of climate change on different topics, such as flood, drought, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity and ecosystems as well as the resulting socio-economic risks, were illustrated by the different examples highlighted during the Forum from different parts of the LMB.

3. Transboundary adaptation needs, approaches and challenges in the LMB and other parts of the world were presented and discussed. It was noted that there are a number of challenges that need to be addressed when it comes to the implementation.

4. The sharing of results and good practices in sector-based national adaptation strategies during the Forum created a basis for transboundary approaches. Concrete measures and examples to implement, replicate and upscale adaptation actions were presented.

5. The exchange of experience on national adaption strategies and action plans in the LMB has identified that the synergy between national and transboundary adaptation efforts can bring about benefits. National and transboundary adaptation efforts should be linked as one requirement for successful implementation of adaptation strategies. The Forum’s participants recognised that the MRC can play an important role in this process.

6. Transboundary cooperation can enhance a broader set of benefits and opportunities than individual-country approaches. Transboundary aspects of adaptation to climate change should be seen as an integral part of a broader development policy, particularly of a socio-economic development one.

7. The development of a transboundary adaptation strategy needs commitment, efforts and resources. Transboundary adaptation has a clear link to the national policy and, therefore, a long-term interaction with policymakers is a prerequisite for successful implementation.

8. The challenges with regard to the uncertainty associated with future impacts from climate change as well as measuring the costs and benefits of adaptation should not lead to inaction. Adaptation strategies should focus on no/low regret options.

The outcomes of the Forum will provide additional valuable input to the MRC’s 1st Report on Status of Climate Change and Adaptation in the Lower Mekong Basin and the formulation of the Mekong Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan, scheduled for 2015. Knowledge, shared experiences and key outcomes will be documented in a forum proceeding and made available to the public.

Siem Reap, Cambodia, 8 October 2014.