Summary of panel discussions on sustainable management of trans-boundary basins across the nexus
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This Mekong2Rio Conference is an extremely important and unique event that the role of trans-boundary cooperation has been made clear, to be fed into RIO. The politicians in the hierarchy – they take it for granted – that we have official trans-boundary cooperation but let us think about what a world would be like if we do not have trans-boundary cooperation. My conclusion is that all trans-boundary RBOs in the world are a kind of invisible peacekeeping initiative. This does not happen in the mind of the hierarchy.

There are messages that I would like to make:

a) there are clear commonalities between nexus approach and trans-boundary approach. The nexus increases the understanding of the interdependences across water, food and energy – this applies also to other sectors such as biodiversity, ecosystem and navigation. However, it is not enough if we are working on the nexus to own the nexus.

b) the second nexus which increases the understanding in our day-per-day work between countries, working together in a trans-boundary river-basin, their specifics, interests, motivation and their legal system as well as their cultural background. Without this kind of understanding, we will not be successful. What is the added value of the nexus debate of agriculture when we are talking from the water perspective? The nexus perspective requests understanding from both sides. The water side is not the teacher for agriculture how to manage water in a sustainable way.

We are in a process to change mindsets. This is a long-term investment which will take some time, before it pays back.

Essential is also a clear science-policy interface. But science - if science likes to be seriously taken into consideration if it comes to policy advice and decisions – faces a communicative challenge to communicate in an understandable language, in order to be heard by the policy makers.

c) nexus is an important element for ensuring transparency of information exchange and stakeholders engagement. There will be no successful process if there is no stakeholder involvement and participation. We need to include all aspects involved.

We have to ensure that the RBOs become the platform for new dialogues in the river basins. We have country-perspectives in a basin on one hand and we have a river basin perspective on the other hand. The river basin perspective will be more than the sum of the individual country perspectives. The added value of the trans-boundary perspective is that you get a new quality when discussing issues and making decisions.

In the draft text for Rio, I cannot find trans-boundary cooperation. We cannot make decisions in Rio without having the trans-boundary dimension in the declaration. In addition to the nexus, this is what we need to take on board in Rio. All of you who are sitting here have to serve as ambassadors for this issue and I hope tomorrow the Ministers will take up the message and bring it to Rio.