



Statement of Save The Mekong Coalition

Mekong Mainstream Dams Are a Major Transboundary Threat to the

Region's Food Security and People:

Civil Society Calls Upon Prime Ministers to Cancel Mainstream Dams

On the occasion of the 20th Meeting of the Mekong River Commission's Council to be held on June 26th in Bangkok, Thailand, the Save the Mekong coalition calls upon the Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam to urgently work together to address the threat posed by a cascade of eleven Mekong mainstream dams to the region's food security and people. Regional leaders must take action to cancel the planned projects, including the Xayaburi and Don Sahong dams, and ensure that future decisions over the shared river are based on scientific knowledge, transboundary impact assessment, and respect for the rights of all riparian nations and the public to a transparent and participatory decision-making process.

As the world's largest inland freshwater fishery, the Mekong River feeds more than 60 million people living within the basin, and the river's extraordinary aquatic biodiversity is second only to the Amazon. The river's connectivity and flood-drought cycles are essential for maintaining the river's rich ecology, fisheries and the sediment balance necessary for the sustainable production of food crops on its fertile floodplains. The Mekong River Commission's 2010 Strategic Environmental Assessment warned of severe environmental, social and cultural threats posed by the dams, the difficulties in mitigating harm to fisheries, and the significant knowledge gaps that hinder informed decision-making. Subsequent studies have highlighted the need for improved energy sector planning and the utilization of more sustainable energy options to achieve the region's development needs.

It is critical that the Mekong River Commission (MRC) and its member countries fully recognize the gravity of the situation facing the Mekong and immediately address the threat posed by the Mekong mainstream dams and the MRC's own failures to effectively ensure regional-decision making over these projects. Since 2010, ongoing regional deliberations over whether to construct the mainstream dams have exposed significant ambiguities and problems in the process of governing the shared river and balancing the needs and concerns of upstream and downstream countries. Despite requests for further study and consultation by the governments of Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as calls by Cambodia and Vietnam for a ten year deferment in decision-making, construction of the Xayaburi and Don Sahong dams is already underway in Lao PDR. The failure of the MRC to ensure cooperation amongst the four governments

according to the terms of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, risks escalation into a more severe crisis once the dams' transboundary impacts are felt.

Over the past six years, widespread public opposition to the Mekong mainstream dams has been expressed nationally, regionally and internationally through petitions and letters to regional governments and the MRC, yet construction on planned projects has continued unabated.

The Save the Mekong coalition continues to stand opposed to the cascade of eleven mainstream dams due to the irreversible cross-border impacts the projects will have on an iconic river that millions of people in the region depend on for their livelihoods and lifeblood.

Informed decisions over these dams cannot be made unless the projects are immediately halted and the necessary studies completed to assess the full impacts throughout the region. Given the severity of the threat posed by the Mekong mainstream dams, regional leaders must take responsibility--and hold each other accountable—for immediate dialogue and action. We respectfully call on regional leaders to prioritize deliberations over the Mekong mainstream dams and ensure they take center-stage during this week's Council meeting. We also demand that the Government of Lao PDR immediately stop all construction of the Xayaburi and Don Sahong projects, and respect the riparian rights of neighboring countries and all peoples dependent on the river and its resources to the robust consultations they are entitled to under international law. Together, we must work to Save the Mekong, as there has never been a more critical time.

Endorsed by:

Both Ends, The Netherlands
Cambodia Volunteers for Society, Cambodia
Cambodian Rural Development Team, Cambodia
Chiang Kong Conservation Group, Thailand
Community Economic Development, Cambodia
Community Resource Centre, Thailand
Corner House, United Kingdom
Earthrights International, USA
Ecosun Cambodia, Cambodia
Fisheries Action Coalition Team, Cambodia
Focus on the Global South, Thailand
Green ID, Vietnam
International Rivers, USA
Living River Siam, Thailand
Jesuit Service Cambodia, Cambodia
Mangrove Action Project, Thailand
Mekong Monitor Tasmania, Australia
Mekong Watch, Japan
Mlup Prum Viheathor Center, Cambodia
My Village, Cambodia
Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces, Thailand

NGO Forum on Cambodia, Cambodia
PanNature, Vietnam
Ponlok Khmer, Cambodia
Probe International, Canada
REDD-Monitor
Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance, Thailand
Vietnam Rivers Network, Vietnam
WARECOD, Vietnam
3S Rivers Protection Network, Cambodia

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