

DRAFT Meeting Note
of the 2nd RTWG Meeting on the Council Study,
11-12 September 2014
Tonle Basac II Restaurant, Phnom Penh

Day1

I. Background information

With a view to ensuring effective coordination amongst MRC Programmes and between the MRC Secretariat and the Member Countries for the implementation of the Study on Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River including impact by Mainstream Hydropower Projects (commonly known as the *Council Study*) The Regional Technical Working Group for the Council Study (RTWG) was established in July 2013 with the composition of 7 member per Member Country. The RTWG held its first meeting in September 2013 and discussed a wide range of issues pertaining to the Study:

1. Participants

Under the chairmanship of Cambodia's Mekong National Committee (CNMC), the 2nd meeting of the Regional Technical Working Group (RTWG) was held at Tonle Bassac II restaurant, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and was attended by 91 participants from the Member Countries, the MRC Secretariat and representatives from the Development Partners (please see the list of participants in attached annex).

2. Main objectives.

One year after the first meeting of the RTWG in 2013, a number of activities have been carried out and the Secretariat saw the necessity to convene the 2nd meeting with the following objectives:

- To gather comments, discuss and agree on the Draft Inception Report of the Council Study
- To discuss and agree on the proposed work plan and resources required as well as role and responsibility of each study team

3. Protocol parts

Opening session

Mr. Hans Guttman, CEO of the Mekong River Commissions Secretariat, delivered his welcome remarks by providing an update of the preparation for the Council Study. He also referred to the elements which constitute the Study: methodologies and approaches used for the study, the work that has been done over the last four years, the process and management of the Study, the Concept Note for the Study approved by the Member Countries. For the Inception Report, new data are being collected and specific details are to be covered. He also highlighted the Role of the Regional Technical Working Group (RTWG) in ensuring that constructive comments are

provided. He also reminded the meeting that external experts have been on board and the new study coordinator for the study would take up his duties in the coming weeks.

In his opening speech, on behalf of the JC Chair, H.E Dr. An Pich Hatda from CNMC, made references to the verbal discussions of the four Prime Minister of the MRC Member Countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam) at the Third Mekong-Japan summit in 2011, the 18th and 19th MRC Council meetings, the 1st RTWG meeting in Vientiane to finalize the ToR for the Study, the Ho Chi Minh City Declaration adopted by the Member Countries at the 2nd MRC Summit in ho Chi Minh City where the Member Countries agreed to expedite the Council study. In this connection, the Draft Inception Report has been shared with MC and is tabled for discussion at today's RTWG meeting. He also informed the meeting that in the course of the meeting, the participants would be updated on the progress of Viet Nam's Delta Study and its implications with the Council Study. A special note was made to the Development Partners for their valuable support to the Study.

II Presentations and Discussions

1. Adoption of the agenda

The Technical Coordination Advisor (TCA) presented the agenda of the meeting indicating that first would be on updating the status of the Council Study and to gather comments from the Member Countries with the view to finalizing the Draft Inception Report while day 2 would be devoted to the next step for implementation of the Study, Study management and the update on the progress by the MRC Programmes. In addition, VNMC will provide an update on the progress of Viet Nam's Delta Study.

As the matter related to stakeholders' engagement was not discussed at the first RTWG meeting DFAT (Australia) has suggested adding this item into the list of topics for discussion. In this respect, there is a need to identify key stakeholder groups and need feedback and comments from the Member Countries on this matter.

2. Recap on the Study

The TCA informed the meeting that the MRC did not have to start from scratch as a lot of work has been done by the MRC and other external organizations. The TCA first provided background information of the Study that included rationale, objectives, main outputs, deliverables, scope of the study, stakeholder engagement and the implementation process of the Study. The TCA then provided the information about the methodologies used for identifying the relevant literature using "google". A literature review was conducted to identify key knowledge, information and date relevant to the Study. As a result of the selection, 3,000 documents were selected with some relevance to the Council Study. Amongst those documents, two documents were regarded as absolute key publications of the most relevance to the Study: the *2011MRC's BDP Scenario Assessment* and the *Smajgle and Ward (2013) "the water-Food-Energy nexus in the Mekong River"*.

Numerous publications by MRC Programmes (AIP, CCAI, EP, FMMP, IKMP, ISH and NAP) are also of relevance to the Study.

Comments from the Meeting:

Thailand indicated that between the first and the second RTWG meetings, one year has elapsed but Thailand did not have the opportunity to work with the RTWG and has today difficulty expressing concerns. However, TNMC recognizes the difficulty in compiling the data and received complaint about the delays from Line Agencies who expressed the necessity of expediting the Study.

On the presentation made by the TCA, Thailand disagreed with the statement made by the Secretariat that BDP assessment has the most relevance for the Council Study. According to Thailand, the issue on water flow under Integrated Basin Flow Management has been left out in the presentation. If the DRIFT techniques are to be adopted, there will be a need to assess it again. Furthermore, Thailand raised the difficulty in making the economic assessment due to boundary complications.

According to Thailand, the work of BDP is seen as one direct activity while many activities have been carried out by others: WUP, work on transboundary impact, water quality, ecosystem, biodiversity which contributed to the previous studies. Thailand rejected the statement that environmental flow and DRIFT techniques are the most relevant to the Council Study and indicated that credits should be given to the original teams who had worked on previous studies like the EP team.

Thailand further stated that in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of DRIFT are missing in the Inception Report and the report itself fails to assess the transboundary values. This may be due to the fact that discussions with other Countries on this matter have not been held yet.

Thailand questioned the data used for dividing the river zones and the basis for such a division into four geographical zones.

Concerns were also expressed by Thailand's line agencies over the current timeframe and the status of the Inception Report which is required to be finalized and to serve as a guiding document for the implementation of the Study.

Viet Nam shared the views that the Study should not be based only on BDP impacts assessment and emphasized that BDP is just one study among many others such as the SEA study and the CCAI study. In this respect, CEO shared his view that the Study did not rely only on the BDP scenarios. In the literature review, 50 publications produced by the MRC have been identified and selected. The discussions on how these could be incorporated are on-going.

With regard to the objectives of the Study, Viet Nam suggested going beyond the timeframe of the BDS (2016-2020) to see long term impacts.

Viet Nam stated that attention should be paid to technology transfer to the Member Countries.

With respect to the deliverables for the Study, Viet Nam wished to see more detailed approaches, methodologies and tools for the assessment.

Viet Nam also expressed concern about the timeframe for the implementation of the Study which leaves the Secretariat a substantial work with very limited time. For that reason, Viet Nam advised the Secretariat to have clear implementation plan and effective coordination amongst different teams which are going to be established, Viet Nam further suggested discussing ways how to finalize the report with clear indicator, approaches and methodologies.

The indicators need to be detailed and cleared (not just an example as indicated in the report), these need to be worked out immediately and very intensively with lots of discussion. The indicators should be developed for each impact area. SMART criteria for indicators development should be followed. Those indicators need to be consulted closely with MCs.

Viet Nam also raised a point that the Mekong Delta of Cambodia and Viet Nam should include the Floodplains in Cambodia, so the geographical scope should not separate into: the Cambodia flood plains and the Mekong Delta of Cambodia and Viet Nam.

Viet Nam advised the Secretariat to better describe and elaborate The DRIFT technique to make them credible.

Cambodia expressed view that the timeframe of the study is very ambitious but important to invest in.

There are also concerns over the gaps identified in the literature review and scenario and nexus. Clarification was sought on literature review whether the baseline about potential impacts will be used in the Study. As the MRC Secretariat is moving ahead with the Study, it has to make sure that the Secretariat has sufficient knowledge and understanding about the development of the Mekong River Basin. In other words, how to protect environmental system and ecology.

The Secretariat should have clear policy at MRCS and at the National Level. Cambodia also questioned the Secretariat's technological advance whether it has enough capacity to implement the Study.

With regard to stakeholders' engagement, Cambodia expressed the importance of identifying only stakeholders relevant to the Study.

With regard to the proposal from the TCA to hold a stakeholder's forum for the Council Study back-to-back with the BDP regional stakeholders' forum, Thailand argued that the BDP stakeholder Forum and the Council Study stakeholder Forum should adopt a common platform as the audience is identical. However, Thailand shared views that the focus should be more on the impacts of water resources developments on the Mekong River and not solely on the Study.

MRCS's responses

CEO of MRCS clarified that the Inception Report will remain a living document and needs to be updated periodically as new elements will come up during the implementation period. With the inputs from the 2nd RTWG meeting, the Secretariat expects to be able to get a final draft.

The Programme Coordinator for BDP clarified to the meeting that the BDP regional forum will bring together broader stakeholders from private sector, CSO, NGOs and the main objective of this forum is to provide an update on the BDS. However, the Secretariat took note of the point made by Thailand. But to have two meetings back-to-back, TCU can discuss with BDP how to combine those forums into one or how to elaborate a common agenda.

CEO indicated that the DRIFT approaches expect to transfer the competences and technologies to the Member Countries. One concern remains though: how to handle the information collected by other which requires clear procedures and regulations.

The TCA supported the proposal from Cambodia to have limited number of stakeholders as some stakeholders may have limited understanding about technical aspects of the Study and may need assistance. In this connection, Cambodia questioned the Secretariat whether the Council Study will be able to address all the needs of the stakeholders as identified at the beginning.

3. Assessment Methodology and Technical framework

The Consultant provided the information about the process of the assessment which consists of three modules: biological resource assessment, social assessment and economic assessment.

The consultant provided the definition of DRIFT Technique (Downstream Response to the Imposed Flow Transformations) which was developed ten years ago for the purpose of conducting assessments of impact on River Basins to address uncertainties. Using DRIFT technique, the Council Study focuses on 5 specific zones of the river plus the East Sea coastal areas which are directly influenced by the Mekong Estuary. The Indicators should be measurable to come up with more quantitative indicators.

The consultant also highlighted a number of indicators and a model of response curves taken from previous studies and could be used as a reference for the Council Study.

For water resources development configuration, the Consultant presented different configurations of the baseline and how the assessments should be conducted.

Comments from the Meeting:

Thailand indicated that the indicators were not suitable in the context of the Mekong River since they were taken from previous studies and may not reflect the real situation of the Mekong River. The parameters used need to be revisited and agreed upon by the Member Countries.

On the Baseline, Thailand indicated that the baseline with other components needs to be discussed at the inception phase of the Study.

Thailand was also of the view that if the period covers the period 1985-2000, the information about Chinese Dams will not be accounted for in the baseline.

Thailand made a comment on who is going to conduct the cumulative assessment as BDP had indicated that BDP was doing the assessment for the BDS without mentioning the scenarios for the Council Study.

Lao PDR noted that the baseline used in the Study covered the period of 16 years from 1985 to 2000. In order to cover a larger period with larger information about the River, Lao PDR suggested covering the period of the 1960's up to 1985 instead

With regard to the definition of the baseline, the consultant was of the opinion that small technical meetings should be convened to discuss this matter and the decision should be made by the Countries. Thailand agreed with this assumption but indicated that those technical meetings should have been convened before this RTWG meeting.

Viet Nam sought for more clarification from the MRC on the use of different terminologies in the approach: scenarios versus configurations or development portfolio. The use of terminologies needs to be consistent to avoid misinterpretations.

On response curves, Viet Nam questioned how the team would manage the inputs from the experts and was of the view that discussions with them and adjustment of the parameters would be needed.

Viet Nam further shared view that changing the indicators required a complicated methodology. The three types of assessments hydrological and sediment, biological and socio-economic assessments should supplement each other. However, Viet Nam made an observation that the information on the interconnections and linkages between the three types of assessments (as described in the methodologies) is not clear.

MRCS's responses

The Consultant clarified that the choice of the terminologies was based on BDP terminologies. However, adjustment will be made after consultations.

With regard to the mainstream hydropower development scenarios, the Consultant further indicated that the team would work with ISH on mainstream hydropower dams including the tributaries dams and climate changes scenarios.

CEO of MRCS addressed the comments from Viet Nam and Thailand indicating that the 1985 - 2000 baseline has already been established and used in MRC. With regard to the information about Chinese dams, CEO is of the opinion that the baseline will have to include 2013-2014 which will require extra work from what has been already done.

4. Hydrological and sediment assessment

Comments from the Meeting:

Thailand questioned who has the responsibilities for carrying out modelling activities.

MRCS's responses

In this regard, the consultant indicated that with a lot of modeling work, external modelers may need to be recruited to support IKMP.

The consultant indicated that SWAT model is used in the Study as indicated in Table 3.3 in the Inception Report.

The Programme Coordinator for IKMP provided the information to the meeting that the baseline for the period 1985-2000 is being updated.

The sediment data quality assurance has been completed by ISH and IKMP and both IKMP and ISH have produced sediment analysis report to support the Council Study

A Technical Report has been finalized and distributed to the Member Countries to be combined with WWF's technical report for hydrology and sediment assessment.

In response to the comment made by CCAI on how agriculture and irrigation will impact on the flow and how they will be linked with the DRIFT model, the consultant clarified that time series of flow does increase the duration of dry seasons and, for irrigation, the Study is aimed at estimating land use changes.

5. Biological Resources assessment

The meeting was informed that response curves are used to describe the expected changes in indicator with change of flow and sediment regimes.

Comments from the Meeting:

Thailand made the point that the biological assessment cannot be used with scenarios as there are always variations. In this respect, the consultant shared her views that the model will always generate uncertainty but it can help to predict what could happen. The first change of the river is in physical and physical are predictable, may not be 100 % but the model can still predict some changes. The trend is easy to predict in the ecosystem.

The representative from Australia shared his view that there should not be any reason for not using DRIFT technique. He further indicated that this technique is also being used in the Delta Study and it can be adjusted to fit the real context of the Basin. However, he made a point on whether the response curve and the scenario are the only approaches for the analysis.

Viet Nam raised a number of issues on how to select the site and whether the East Sea coastal areas that are influenced by the Mekong estuary will be part of the five zones. In this connection, Viet Nam made the point that, since the MRC does not have the expertise in this area, the Secretariat may refer to the resource from other organizations. For the selection of the zones, Viet Nam questioned the basis for the selection, ISH 11? Viet Nam sought for further clarifications on the compatibility between the criteria under ISH 11 and the Council Study. If they happened to be compatible, they are based on what?

With regard to the division into five zones, Thailand questioned the rationale for such a division and what was going to be studied in each zone.

MRCS's responses

In response to the questions raised by VNMC, the Consultant provided the explanations that each Programme had selected the sites for monitoring and data collection. For the Study, the Secretariat just needs to identify the locations where the data have been already collected and ISH happens to have done this work.

In response, the Consultant clarified that the same parameters would be used in each zone to see the changes and impact of mainstream project in those zones. For the criteria for the divisions into five zone, the rationale is provided in the Inception Report point 3.1.2 *when defining the zones, the council study will use the same zones used by a number of other MRC Programmes (EP's SIMVA Project, ISH, Integrated Basin flow Management Project, etc.), this will allow the Council Study to capitalize on existing data and knowledge and on on-going process.*

6. Social assessment

The consultant provided the information that this assessment would be partly based on the information provided by the biological resources assessment and partly based on direct benefits and impacts of water resources developments. For instance, hydropower impacts on fisheries: the benefits of providing electricity need to be perceived at both sides: to see the improvement of livelihood, welfare and the ability to use natural resources and this is based on the biological assessment and SIMVA. For the purpose of conducting a social assessment, a number of indicators will be developed to assess the changes in livelihood, income of people, access to resources and health and nutrition. Based on the changes in getting access to natural resources, the Study will use this information to measure the changes in people's welfare. This creates a link between the biological resources assessment and SIMVA and Fisheries data

Comments from the Meeting:

None

7. Macroeconomic assessment

This type of assessment is aimed at capturing the benefits and costs of water resources development to the national and regional economies. To this end, two categories of data are required:

- Aggregation of the data provided by the resource economic assessment and
- Data provided by the thematic teams on the costs for the development

The details about the elements of the assessment are provided in the Power point presentation.

Comments from the Meeting:

Thailand made some comments that more discussions and debates on the three types of assessment are needed.

With respect to the peer review, Thailand questioned the way how the review could be set up, what mechanism and incentive to use? According to Thailand, it can be a small group within the technical working group with technical expertise to provide comments on technical papers.

On literature review, Thailand questioned how the Member Countries could get access to it. Can the Countries gain access to dataset?

Viet Nam questioned the quality of the tools for macroeconomic assessment whether they are good enough for the Study and agreed with the need to have a macroeconomists on board but expressed concerns about the tight timeframe.

With regard to literature review, Viet Nam also questioned the sufficiency of the information and, if additional data is required, we may not have time to collect. Viet Nam questioned how the study can address the uncertainties observed in previous studies due to the lack of good quality of data. In this respect, should the Member Countries check and assess the quality of data, or should MRC take up the job? To remedy this, Viet Nam was of the opinion that it is important to organize those data within the short timeframe.

MRCS's response

The consultant emphasized the need to have the involvement of economists and informed the meeting that a social and an economic expert are expected to join the team.

TCU will send the report on literature review to the Countries. For the access to the dataset, the consultant indicated that a Meta database had been created and the link to that database would be provided.

8. Update on the Delta Study provided by Dr. Son Lam Hung, representative from VNMC

The presentation outlined the differences and similarities of the Mekong Council Study which has a wider scope than Viet Nam's Delta Study. However, both Studies share similar objectives of reducing the uncertainties about the impacts on the Mekong River and, for that reason, both Studies supplement each other.

The presentation also referred to the process used for assessing the ecological aspects: MIKE 11 and MIKE 21C/Ecolab.

Comments from the Meeting:

The Representative from CNMC questioned the process used: Mike21 model and whether the simulation along the Tonle Sap was based on the data used for the assessment on the ecology. He further requested for further information about the results of the simulation in Tonle Sap whether loss of biodiversity has been observed or not? And whether Cambodia can use the results in the future?

In response, the presenter from Viet Nam informed the meeting that not only Viet Nam could benefit from this model simulation but Cambodia also can. The results of the simulation in Tonle Sap will be shared by Viet Nam as per request.

MRCS's responses

The International Technical Advisor (ITA) for EP also indicated that Cambodia can get the result from Viet Nam's bases.

The Programme Coordinator for DMP raised a question about data gaps and how to fill the gaps and whether the Delta Study also covers the six thematic areas. In response, Dr. Son indicated that in collaboration with line agencies of the Member Countries, VNMC looked at the gaps and conducted a survey and data samples to address those gaps. Viet Nam stressed on the importance of having good quality data and therefore natural and socio-economic data are to be collected from both upstream and downstream parts of the Mekong River.

Day 2

9. Study implementation

The consultant provided the information to the participants that the Study would be implemented in three phases: (the details of each phase are provided in the power point slides)

Phase 1: Inception and set up

Phase 2: Knowledge capture

Phase 3: Assessment and write up

The TCA also provided details about how to get inputs from programmes, inputs from external consultancy and the budget required for the Study, the responsibilities of the disciplines teams, the role of TCU and coordination group. He also referred to the need to get external support due to the lack of expertise in some areas and TCU workload.

Comments from the Meeting:

Thailand will wait for detailed information from the Secretariat before providing further comments. However, Thailand reiterated its concern over the delays in the implementation of the activities under the Council Study. If compared with the information shared at the 20th MRC Council meeting in last June, substantial delays have been observed.

Thailand reminded the Secretariat that since the outcomes of this 2nd RTWG meeting would be reported to the upcoming JC meeting, the Secretariat is to make sure that that all information and deliberations are properly recorded. Thailand further requested to report to the JC only the activities implemented by the Secretariat as inputs from the Member Countries have not been provided yet.

With regard to the site visits as indicated in the Inception Phase, Cambodia questioned the basis for such visits and the locations of the visits:

For assessment of coastal areas, Cambodia questioned what external agency will take up the assignment. Cambodia further shared view that the Study does not have a clear selection process and needs to engage the institution that has the experience to conduct such an assessment.

Viet Nam questioned how the DRIFT manager who is under the coordination team can work with other members.

Viet Nam expressed concern about the capability of the thematic team to write up reports and to arrange the work: the thematic team need to have, in some extent, expertise in other areas to be able to use that information that comes from other areas.

Viet Nam questioned the suitability of some leading Programmes in the thematic team and suggested that BDP could better lead the thematic team for domestic & land use rather than EP. In this respect, the consultant clarified the choice for EP which was because of the relevance of EP's SIMVA project and water quality issues. The CEO further indicated that the justification for this choice is referred to in the agreed ToR.

Viet Nam suggested ISH, to lead the team for socio-economic aspects.

Viet Nam noticed that FMMP, as an important Programme for the Study, is missing in Discipline Teams 1 and 5.

Viet Nam also indicated that the climate change team is missing in the Coordination Diagram.

Viet Nam recommends that recruitment of international consultants should be revised; 6 of the 13 consultants cover the area of River botanist, River invertebrates specialist, Herpetologist, Fish biologist, River mammals which according to them appears too many, therefore composition of experts needs to be reconsidered.

Cambodia stressed on the importance of getting national line agencies involved in thematic teams.

The meeting was informed by the consultant that MRC programmes are implementing some activities under their work plan with close coordination with their line agencies.

Lao PDR requested the Secretariat to provide the thematic work plan from each programme to see what each programme has already developed for the Council Study so the countries can map out the programme work.

Thailand disagreed with the statement from the consultant that the work with line agencies is ongoing by stating that Thailand doubts about the understanding and the contributions of the line agencies to the Council Study, as no clear outputs for the Council Study have been generated from the activities and there has not been any technical workshop either to discuss the Programmes' activities or to address the Council Study activities.

Thailand shared their view that since most of the work relies on in-house Programmes' work, the Secretariat seems to have a general estimate of the requirement of external experts' support and relies too much on external experts and less on the contribution of local experts. In this respect, Thailand stressed the need to build up capacity of local experts.

Thailand raised the point that the Secretariat did not honor its engagement made in 2011 to provide information to the general public on the progress of the study in relation to Xayaburi dam project and no information about the Study has been posted on the website.

The Representative from Australia expressed his concern about the short timeframe for the recruitment of consultants and the quality of outputs. Eleven programmes and 30 consultants may lead to highly complex coordination mechanism. Therefore, he suggested using new approach to ensure that everything can be timely implemented within a clear implementation plan.

With regard to the budget, Australia was of the opinion that it is outdated and suggested presenting it by phase and how it should be allocated.

On management issue, Australia indicated that a clear reporting line is needed and an establishment of a Task Force may be considered to ensure accountability of Programmes and quality of work.

Viet Nam requested the Secretariat to provide more information about the budget and an update on the support from the Development Partners.

MRCS's responses

In response to the question about the delays, the consultant indicated that, despite the delays for some activities, some progress has also been made and some activities are being implemented in the Inception phase. For instance, the literature review has been completed and the teams have begun identifying representatives from countries.

The consultant provided explanations on the process that the thematic teams will provide data to discipline teams for the modeling using DRIFT tool to conduct an analysis and assess the impacts. What the thematic teams will get from the discipline teams is the interpreted information about the data. Then, the economic team will use the outcomes for their analysis report and report back to the thematic teams for their thematic report on the impacts for the Council Study.

Each thematic team will use the same team for the assessment of biological and socio economic impacts to ensure that the approach and tools are the same. The TCA further added that the thematic teams and discipline teams will have to work together for writing up the reports. Example: The thematic team will handle the process and management section in the report while the discipline team will handle the technical part in the report. For that, the thematic teams need to develop a standardized report format for all thematic reports.

In response to the question on external and local experts, the consultant clarified that TCU does have concrete figures based on the inputs from the programmes about their actual resources and budget, and the support from national experts required to conduct the work. He also added that for the recruitment of the position of a socio-economic expert which needs to be filled in, the ToR has been elaborated and included in the Inception Report.

With regard to public engagement, the TCA referred to the MRC information disclosure policy under which the Member Countries need to agree to post the Inception Report on the website to be accessed by the public. TCU also needs advice from the Member Countries on the stakeholders' forum.

The CEO indicated that on management and reporting line, the Secretariat is using the existing reporting system and the existing coordination mechanism to support the Council Study work as an innovative approach. The Secretariat takes into account how to coordinate with Line Agencies and NMCS. To remedy the issues related to the large number of consultant (30) who have been proposed to be recruited, CEO indicated that in-house capacity can be used.

For the question of how to engage national and regional consultants, the Secretariat needs more clarity on the budget and the timeframe.

The Consultant further added that each MRC programme has its own network and information technology infrastructure that can be used to prepare the outputs of the Study.

The TCA indicated the budget from MRCS for the Study stands at US\$ 1.7 M from the programmes and US\$ 1.1 M from the Development Partners. In total, the Council Study needs approximately US\$6 M. The amount of US\$ 1.7 M has been secured by MRC programmes under their current activities. Australia and the Trust Fund will provide in total of US\$ 1.1M. The TCA further indicated that some Programmes may have some funding left which could be allocated for the Study.

The CEO provided further information that the MRCS is in discussion with Germany and Switzerland on reallocating their funding in the next planning cycle which will be discussed at the upcoming IDM in early October. He further stated that the average annual budget of the MRCS stands at US\$ 40M with the average expenditures amounting to US\$ 25M. The remaining US\$ 15M is likely to be reallocated for the Study.

Note : Given time constraint, the item on DRIFT presentation has been dropped from the agenda

10. Discussion on the stakeholders' engagement and its work plan.

The TCA informed the meeting that the issue on Stakeholders engagement is mentioned on Page 53 of the Inception Report and a number of tasks have been proposed for knowledge capture with three planned activities.

Comments from the Meeting:

Lao PDR shared comments that all the proposed thematic activities should be carried out at the same time with clear milestones and accurate valid scientific evidence on the impacts including in the upstream, downstream and central part of the Mekong River. Lao PDR hopes that the focus of the Study is not only on the impact of hydropower and the Study will be objective and accurate.

Thailand was of the view that the stakeholders' forum should be held after the start up workshop in order to have a better understanding and clear picture about the Study.

Viet Nam agreed with the proposal to hold the stakeholders Forum but needs to see more concrete outputs, clearer milestones and timeframe.

Cambodia strongly supports the idea of having the stakeholders' forum and also supports Thailand's position for setting clear targets. Having said that Cambodia was of the view that in order to get the engagement and involvement of civil societies and NGOs there is a need to conduct prior national consultations for a comprehensive dissemination of information about the Study to grass root people.

Lao PDR after their internal discussion also agreed to hold a stakeholders' forum.

MRCS's responses

The TCA reminded the Member Countries that more budget need to be secured for national consultations prior to the forum in November.

11. Next steps

The consultant provided a list of immediate next steps starting from the update of the Inception Report with the incorporated comments from this 2nd RTWG meeting; to elaborate a detailed work plan; finalize the budget; finalize the organogram and reporting line; to set up MRCs coordination group led by OCEO/TCU; to consolidate the team; to develop team work plans and organize the three days Start up workshop (5- 7 November). The objectives of the startup workshop are to present the composition of the team and their work plans, present the updated Inception Report, present planning activities (site visit, development of water resources configuration) and continue model configurations IKMP/BRA.

Comments from the Meeting:

Viet Nam requested the Secretariat to ensure that the recommendations from the Member Countries on the methodologies and how to address shortcoming are seriously taken into account

in the updated Inception Report which should be sent to the Member Countries early in advance prior to the startup workshop. The Secretariat should exert efforts in making the information in the Inception Report easy to understand by the readers.

Viet Nam requested MRC Programme to include activities under the Council Study in their work plan.

Viet Nam advised to find ways and means on how the Countries can be involved in the process. For the recruitment process, the countries also need to see a clear plan.

Viet Nam further requested the Secretariat to record all the recommendations from the Countries in the minutes of this 2nd RTWG meeting and share the minutes with the Countries.

Viet Nam also wishes to see in the annex attached to Inception Report the link with Viet Nam's Delta Study and how both Studies can supplement each other.

Viet Nam also recommended that the indicators and scenarios need to be more precise and, for that, the Member Countries need to agree on the scoping documents for indicators and scenarios.

Viet Nam advised the MRCS to have a Work Plan beyond 2016.

Thailand advised the Secretariat to come up with clear indicators, baseline and response curve in order to proceed with designing the work plan and to also circulate the latest information about the DRIFT techniques for further dissemination to the line agencies. Thailand looks forward to having a technical meeting on this issue.

Viet Nam questioned the number of the participants from the Member Countries for the start-up workshop whether it should be the same as the composition of the RTWG (seven from each country). and suggested six persons from the six thematic groups.

Thailand (with agreement from Lao PDR) suggested that the decision should be made by each NMC but proposed to have four persons per country: one delegate with overall perspective and the three to provide key outputs on biological, economic and socio-economic aspects.

MRCS's responses

With regard to building up the synergies between the two studies, the consultant shared her view that there is a wide range of possibilities of how to make connections between the two studies. The models, hydrology and DRIFT technique have some similarities but are beyond the scope to define the connection between the two studies. Therefore, the consultant requested for some guidance on the scope and, to assist the countries in their decision making, proposed to prepare a report on the obvious links between the two studies. In this connection, the consultant indicated the need to consolidate the teams to discuss this matter with the involvement of the NMCs.

The Programme Coordinator for BDP informed the meeting that since the BDP Regional stakeholder Forum on BDS will bring together a larger audience; he was of the opinion that the

BDP forum should be held separately and not back-to-back with the stakeholder Forum for the Council Study as suggested by TCU.

The CEO supported the suggestion to have four representatives per country: one to provide overall view and three to provide outputs on the three aspects: environment, socio and economic. This approach can help avoid discussing technical issues and to focus more on the outputs. The CEO informed the meeting that the record of the meeting would be ready by next Wednesday and be sent to the Countries for further comments.

III. Closing session

1. Closing speech by CEO

The CEO thanked the participants from the Member Countries, the Secretariat and the Representatives of Development Partners for their constructive advice and recommendations which are of great importance as the MRC is move forward with the implementation of the Study. He also mentioned the importance of public continued engagement at the national level. He looks forward to the startup workshop in November.

2. Closing speech delivered by the representative of JC Chair

H.E Dr. An Pich Hatda thanked MRC Programmes for their active support to the Council Study and appreciated comments from the participants and welcomed suggestions from the Development Partners with the view to expediting the implementation of the Study. He further added that the Member Countries have high expectation on the result of the Study which requires an inclusive, participatory and transparent process.

The meeting ended at 12.00

Phnom Penh, 12 September 2014

Rapporteurs:

Santi Baran, TCU and

Detsada Soukhaseum, OCEO