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OPENING AND WELCOMING REMARKS
2nd Mekong Climate Change Forum:
Adaptation to Climate Change in the Transboundary Context
6-8 October 2014, Siem Reap, Kingdom of Cambodia

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am truly honoured today to join you all and preside over at the Opening of the **Second Mekong Climate Change Forum** of the Mekong River Commission, held in our Angkor Ancient Town of Siem Reap province of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, **His Excellency Mr. Lim Kean Hor**, *Minister for Water Resources and Meteorology, Chairman of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee, and Member of MRC Council for Cambodia*, on my own behalf and as the host country, I would like to warmly welcome you all to this important gathering today and wish all Distinguished Delegates a pleasant stay in Siem Reap — the town with the land of wonder of the Angkor Complex and the memorable culture and tradition of Cambodian people. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee Secretariat and the MRC Secretariat for their collective efforts in making this international gathering possible.

This is the second MRC regional platform on climate change, following the First Mekong Climate Change Forum held in February 2009 in Bangkok, the Kingdom of Thailand. It has been five years now and a lot have happened.

The **Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** made observations on the first effects of climate change, which are truly relevant to this forum. The impacts of climate change will be experienced by many groups in society and across many economic sectors. These include flood risks, droughts, reduced biodiversity, food insecurity, economic production losses, and increased health risks. And there is no exception for the people of the Mekong either.

The future climate of the Lower Mekong Basin, like much of the world, will be warmer. From the mountainous areas of northern Lao PDR to the low-lying Mekong Delta of Viet Nam, the change in climate is being felt thoroughly. We can see news headlines more often about floods, droughts and storms which affect the well-being and livelihoods of

the more than 60 million people of the Mekong. Their livelihoods are so much intertwined with the Mekong water resources such as fisheries and agriculture. Such a fact has a great implication: the high degree of dependency on water resources for livelihoods and food security of the communities suggests a high vulnerability to any decline in their availability, quality and diversity. This really is a great concern for many of us. Moreover, a recent MRC study found that the temperature in 2050 is projected to increase between 1 and 2 °C in Cambodia alone. For us Cambodians, this trend and this happening are worrying us a lot.

The same is true for the Royal Government of Cambodia – We are worried and we have taken action. Under this **Fifth Legislature**, the Government has set one of the high priorities in responding to climate change, which can be seen through the commitment to continue to implement the **Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency in Cambodia – Phase III**. We believe that many environmental issues are cross-sectoral, transboundary in nature, which requires coordination across government agencies and countries at both regional, national and sub-national levels including cooperation with all the stakeholders in the region.

That's why, the Royal Government will, in response, continue to take a comprehensive development approach towards environmental management in Cambodia through, for example:

- Intensifying efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change by strengthening adaptation capacity and resiliency to climate change, particularly by implementing the “**National Policy on Green Development**” and the “**National Strategic Plan on Green Development 2013-2030**”.
- Stepping up involvement in international cooperation in the water sector to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of water resources use as well as to address negative impacts arising from floods, droughts and climate change.
- And continuing to strengthen technical and institutional capacity to promote the mainstreaming of climate change responses into the policies, laws and plans at national and sub-national levels.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the regional level, Cambodia works very closely with three other Member Countries of the MRC – Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam – to tackle transboundary impacts of climate change and to ensure that adaptation plans are mainstreamed into the daily operations of both private and public sectors.

This is primarily because mainstreaming will ensure that climate stress is integrated with the multitude of other stresses that human and natural systems must cope with. It also helps avoid a portfolio of efforts that are unrealistic, inefficient, and potentially ineffective, particularly if they are working at cross-purposes. However, experience with mainstreaming adaptation is short.

Moreover, adaptation is not just business-as-usual development. Development that fails to integrate climate considerations will not be sustainable; and in some cases, it may

make populations or sectors *more* vulnerable to climate impacts. Apparent examples include coastal developments that ignore sea-level rise; increased reliance on air-conditioning, without regard for efficiency and demand-side management; and investments in irrigation to maintain rural livelihoods no longer suited to a changing climate and hydrology.

So what do we need now?

We need development that is visionary and sustainable. We need a comprehensive climate change adaptation strategy that is situation-based and practical. And above all we need state of the art knowledge and lessons around the world, especially in this region, on climate change, climate change adaptation and mainstreaming, from which we can derive to provide us with different views to develop and update our adaptation strategy.

So this **Second Mekong Climate Change Forum** is fully timely and relevant in providing new knowledge and experiences on climate change adaptation and mainstreaming in the region. I believe that our delegates here in this room are full of various practical knowledge and experiences on climate change. This is fundamentally important to us, and I'm so pleased that the MRC Secretariat is able to gather our delegates here to extract these knowledge and experiences.

I hope very much indeed that during the course of this forum, you will share as much of your knowledge and experience as you can with others and learn as much as feasible from each other too.

Take this opportunity, I like to thank development partners for their possible technical and financial assistance for the MRC Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative Program.

And I would like to wish all the delegates who are joining us here a very fruitful and productive time and an enjoyable and memorable stay in Siem Reap.

Finally, I hereby declare the **Second Mekong Climate Change Forum** "open".

Thank you very much for your attention.