**CONCEPT NOTE**

**PHOTO CONTEST “MEKONG DIVERSITY THROUGH YOUR EYES”**

**Overview**

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is holding a photography contest with the overarching theme of “**Mekong Diversity through Your Eyes**”. The application period runs from **7 July through 24 September 2017** (World River Day). Winners will be notified **by 1 November 2017** and officially announced at an award ceremony scheduled for **22** **November 2017** (TBC) at the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

The photo contest is organised in collaboration with the National Mekong Committees (NMCs) of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, with financial support from the World Bank through the MRC’s Mekong Integrated Water Resources Management Project (M-IWRMP). The IWRM project promotes the MRC’s procedural rules and tools on water use negotiation, data sharing and flow monitoring to facilitate transboundary cooperation among the Mekong countries at both national and basin levels. It fosters IWRM approaches of multi-sectoral, coordinated planning and management of water utilisation within and across borders.

The contest will be launched and promoted through the MRC’s and NMCs’ websites and social media and other communication platforms. The winning photos will be displayed at an MRC-hosted award ceremony and featured in the 2018 MRC’s IWRMP calendar and/or other visual products.

**Goals and Objectives**

The photo contest aims to celebrate the diversity of the Mekong with a variety of photos, and raise awareness of the importance of transboundary cooperation through IWRM-based approaches to support sustainable development of the Mekong Basin.

The contest seeks pictures that represent competing demands for the Mekong water, including for domestic use, agricultural irrigation, fisheries, transport, and power generation.

We also look for photos showing the beauty of the Mekong and its abundant natural resources that riverine communities rely on for livelihoods, and images featuring the impacts of development and climate change that threaten the sustainability of the Mekong’s ecosystems, such as flooding, siltation and degradation of fish habitats and wetlands.

Photographers are encouraged to use their imaginations to capture fascinating photos that highlight:

* Beautiful features of the Mekong and its major tributaries in the Mekong Basin, and people’s unique lives in their riverine communities.
* A wide range of demands for the use of the Mekong water and natural resources, such as domestic water supply, fishing, farming, flood control, hydropower generation, river transport, and tourism.
* Impacts of urbanization, infrastructure development and climate change on the Mekong’s ecosystems and people’s lives, and various efforts made to minimise those impacts.

Diverse winning images of the Mekong, which will be displayed and featured in the 2018 calendar and other communication platforms, will showcase the need for cross-border cooperation to effectively manage the shared resources. These photos are expected to inspire further actions at community, national and regional levels to jointly address water issues for the benefit of people in the basin.

**Eligibility**

The contest is open to **amateur photographers** of all ages. They must be a citizen and resident of one of the MRC’s member countries: Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam. The judges of the contest, contest organizers, contest sponsors, and their respective family members are not eligible to participate.

**Submission Requirements**

* Photos must be relevant to the contest’s theme;
* Submit a maximum of **5 photos in digital and JPEG format;**
* Photos must not be digitally manipulated in any way;
* Image files must be between **3 and 5 megabytes**, with at least **1,600** **pixels** in dimension. In the event that your submission is selected as a finalist or winner, you will be asked to submit high resolution images for printing and display, and if applicable, RAW images to check if adjustments made to the image comply with the contest’s rules;
* Each photo must include the following information: **Title, date shot, location and caption** (maximum 100 words in either English or the photographer’s native language), explaining what the picture portrays;
* Photos taken **before 1 January 2016** will not be considered;
* Photos that have won awards or placed in other photography contests or have been published will be disqualified;
* The photographer must be the sole author of the entries and hold all intellectual property rights to them;
* The photographer must have received permission from the subject(s) in the submitted photos, agreeing that the images will be submitted to the MRC’s photo contest and that the images may be used or published by the MRC;
* When entering the contest, the photographer agrees to the contest’s terms and conditions, attached to the application form;
* The photographer must submit the photos via email to [mrcphotocontest@mrcmekong.org](mailto:mrcphotocontest@mrcmekong.org) by **24 September 2017**, at 17:00 (local time), by inserting the **nationality** and **country of residency** in the **subject of email**;
* When sending the photos, the photographer must attach **a filled-in and signed application form**, along with a **valid ID**, proving your nationality, country of residence and occupation.

**Prizes**

Twelve winning images will be selected based on jury’s decision. Each individual can win only one prize or prize package.

* 1st best image: $500 cash, gold medal with certificate
* 2nd best image: $300 cash, silver medal with certificate
* 3rd best image: $200 cash, bronze medal with certificate
* 4 country-based outstanding images: $100 cash with certificate
* 5 other highly rated image: Certificate

Winning photographers will be invited to an award ceremony hosted by the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane, Lao PDR. Winning images may be featured in the 2018 MRC’s IWRMP calendar and other MRC’s visual products.

**Contest Deadline and Extension**

Photos will be accepted until 17:00 (local time) on Sunday, 24 September 2017. All photos received thereafter will be disqualified. If deemed necessary, the organizer/MRC reserves the right to extend the deadline of the contest for a reasonable period of up to 30 days.

**Evaluation criteria**

A panel of judges from diverse backgrounds, including subject-matter experts and a professional photographer, will review the submitted photos. Two rounds of reviews/evaluation will be conducted as follows:

* **First round selection:** Submitted photos will first be reviewed by the MRC’s communication team for technical compliance with the submission requirements. Any photo that does not satisfy any of these requirements will not be considered for further review. The team will then select 30 top photos based on the following criteria:

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| No | Criteria for evaluation |
| 1 | Does the photo meet the minimum requirements in terms of file size and detailed information such as date shot, location and caption? |
| 2 | Is the photo relevant to the theme of the contest? |
| 3 | Does the photo have good quality or meet the technical excellence such as proper exposure, shutter speed, white balance and depth of field? |
| 4 | Is the photo original or has it been manipulated? |

* **Second round selection by the panel/judges:** Out of the shortlisted photos, the panel of 6 judges (4 from MRC, 1 professional photographer and 1 photo curator) will select 3 best images and 5 other highly rated images, based on how well the pictures depict the issues illustrated under the contest’s theme. Four judges from NMCs will select 4 country-based outstanding photos.

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| **No** | **Criteria for evaluation** | **Total Maximum Points** | **Score** |
| 1 | Relevance to the objective of the contest | 30 points |  |
| 2 | Originality | 30 points |  |
| 3 | Quality/composition/lighting | 20 points |  |
| 4 | Caption | 20 points |  |
| Total maximum points | | 100 |  |

**Deadline for Determination of Winning Candidates:** The photos will be chosen within 60 days after the submission date. The MRC reserves the right to extend this period if additional time is required.

**Terms and Conditions**

By entering the contest, the photographer accepts the contest’s terms and conditions as follows:

* The photographer declares that the submitted photos were taken by himself/herself and guarantees that s/he hold all intellectual property rights;
* The photographer declares that s/he has received permission from the subject(s) appearing in the photographs, agreeing that the images will be submitted to the MRC’s photo contest and that the images may be used or published by the MRC;
* If the photographer is selected as a finalist or winner, s/he will supply high resolution images for printing and display, and If applicable, RAW images to check if adjustments made to the image comply with the contest’s requirements;
* The photographer declares that the submitted photos have not been digitally manipulated. While post processing images including minor adjustments to exposure, contrast, cropping and sharpening is allowed, manipulating images such as adding, removing or moving people, animals, plants or other objects in the photos is strictly prohibited;
* Recognition of the winning images and finalists will be widely exposed through the MRC’s website, social media platforms, media and non-media channels, and other informational materials;
* Finalists will be invited to an award ceremony hosted by the MRC Secretariat in Vientiane, Lao PDR, in which the winning photos will be displayed. The winning images may be used for publication of the 2018 MRC’s IWRMP calendar and other visual products;
* The MRC accepts no responsibility for technical or other disturbances that may interrupt the submission of photos;
* The photographer shall comply with other terms and conditions of the MRC photo contest. The MRC reserves the right to exclude photos from the contest if the photographer breaches the contest’s terms and conditions.

**Copyright**

* The photographer retains all copyrights to their photos and agrees to grant the MRC a free of charge, non-exclusive, and license to use, reproduce, modify, display, publish, distribute and disseminate of the winning images, whether or not combined with other photos, text and graphics, for awareness raising, information sharing, reporting, training and education, editorial, and other promotional purposes;
* The MRC is entitled to use the winning photos on the internet of any suitable medium and in its publications, such as reports, magazines, newsletters, calendars, postcards or any other suitable promotional materials, but has no obligation to do so;
* When the MRC publishes any of the winning images, it will ensure that the photographer’s name appears in the following manner: MRC/name of the photographer.