

Joint Development Partner Statement
on the occasion of the Information Development Partners Meeting
Vientiane, 29th of June 2017

Strategic/political messages

1. Development Partners (DPs) welcome the opportunity to attend this “Information Development Partners Meeting” in Vientiane, Lao PDR, and express our appreciation to the Government of Lao PDR for hosting this meeting. Development Partners highly value this opportunity to engage with Member Countries and the Mekong River Commission (MRC) Secretariat.
2. DPs believe that the MRC has a key role to play to bring about consensus on development projects with transboundary impacts along the Mekong River mainstream and its tributaries. DPs welcome MRC’s role to provide impartial knowledge about trends and impacts in the basin.
3. We remain committed to supporting the MRC’s efforts as it seeks to deliver a sustainable Mekong River Basin, which is economically prosperous, socially just, and environmentally sound.
4. DPs and MRC Member Countries have signed on to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) framework. We fully support that the MRC aligns its reporting and monitoring framework to that of the SDGs.
5. Poverty reduction and gender equality should be at the center of all plans and activities of the MRC. Therefore, DPs encourage the MRC Secretariat to continue developing the gender action plan and strengthening the gender capacity of the Member Countries.
6. DPs applaud the process and outcome of the technical review of the Procedure for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) for the Pak Beng Hydropower Project. DPs welcome the agreement on a joint statement and action plan to avoid, minimize or mitigate any potential negative impacts, including transboundary impacts. We are encouraged by this participatory and open regional process, and wish to see a continuation in this direction.
7. DPs congratulate the MRC on improving its communication, media, and stakeholder outreach, and engagement with civil society at the regional level. DPs encourage the National Mekong Committees to strengthen consultation at the national and local level.
8. DPs appreciate the MRC’s efforts in documenting the lessons learnt from former PNPCA processes. We are looking forward to the review and discussion of the finalized Commentary Note by the MRC Joint Platform.
9. DPs look forward to the finalization of the Council Study by December 2017. We believe that it will serve as basis for effectively and pro-actively addressing the issue of cumulative long-term transboundary impacts.

10. DPs encourage the full integration of the National Indicative Plans (NIPs) into domestic policies, plans and budgets. DPs also encourage MRC to strengthen cooperation on the implementation of the decentralization process, which has experienced significant delays since the adoption of the Regional Roadmap in 2014.
11. DPs welcome the opportunity to learn from the Member Countries their plans for coordination and management of dams in a cascade system.
12. DPs encourage the MRC to further intensify cooperation with Myanmar, China, and relevant regional frameworks.
13. DPs are concerned about the low implementation and financial disbursement rate in the past 18 months. We welcome adjustments of the budget, annual work plan, and delivery approaches to achieve the outcomes in the Strategic Plan.
14. DPs encourage the MRC to consider their long term financing strategy, including projected contributions from Member Countries until 2030.
15. DPs look forward to an update on the 2018 MRC Summit, which we encourage to focus on the nexus between water, food and energy in the basin. We would like to enquire if any review of the implementation of the Ho Chi Minh City Declaration will take place before the next Summit.
16. DPs thank the MRC for its continued cooperation. As in previous years, we are looking forward to a written response to this statement within one month after this meeting.

This statement is endorsed by the following Development Partners: Australia, European Union, France, Germany, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, The United States, and World Bank.

Technical issues

17. DPs would appreciate if Thailand could brief the MRC and the DP group on the results of Thailand's feasibility study of the proposed new water use / diversion projects and any subsequent plans for the submission to the PNPCA process.
18. DPs recommend that the design changes of the Xayaburi hydropower dam be subject to a review as soon as possible.
19. DPs thank the MRC for its efforts to finalize the basin-wide assessment and the Mekong Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (MASAP), which will be important instruments to improve basin-wide resilience.
20. DPs welcome the recent decision to adopt a preliminary regional guidance on Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment and express hope that this will be concluded successfully.
21. DPs welcome the establishment of the MRC Staff Association and the recent election of its representatives to address management and staff concerns within the organization.
22. DPs stress the importance of the monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan as a tool for ensuring accountability and transparency.
23. DPs would welcome a review of the MRC reform process including the establishment of the basket funding mechanism, the new structure of the MRC Secretariat, and decentralization within the context of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020.