

Ministerial Meeting
For the preparation of the 3rd MRC Summit - Joint Session with
Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and Other Partners
Mekong River Commission
4 April 2018
Siem Reap, Kingdom of Cambodia

Opening Address by
H.E. Mr. Lim Kean Hor

Minister of Water Resources and Meteorology
Chairperson of Cambodia National Mekong Committee
Member of the MRC Council for Cambodia
Chairperson of the Ministerial Meeting for the 3rd MRC Summit

H.E. Mr. Bun Hean

Secretary of State of the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
Permanent Vice Chairperson of Cambodia National Mekong Committee
Alternate Member of the MRC Council for Cambodia

H.E. Mr. Sommad Pholsena

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment
Chairman of Lao National Mekong Committee
Member of the MRC Council for Lao PDR

H.E. General Surasak Karnjanarat

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment
Chairperson of the Thai National Mekong Committee
Member of the MRC Council for Thailand

H.E. Dr. Tran Hong Ha

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment
Chairman of Viet Nam National Mekong Committee
Member of the MRC Council for Viet Nam
Chairperson of the MRC Council for 2018

Vice ministers, ambassadors and other high-level representatives from all our partners,

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and a very warm welcome to this Ministerial Meeting for the 3rd MRC Summit - Joint Session with Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and Other Partners.

It's my pleasure and honor to welcome all of you from the MRC Member Countries, Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and other partners and friends of the MRC to this beautiful and historical city of Siem Reap.

Tomorrow we are holding our most important event; that is, the 3rd MRC Summit, under One Mekong, One Spirit – our Mekong Spirit. It's important because the Summit is a capstone event that will reaffirm the mandate and mission of the MRC and further enhance open dialogue and cooperation in the basin. The event is intended to boost ongoing joint efforts and partnerships to address prevailing challenges and seize opportunities to achieve an economically prosperous, socially just, and environmentally sound Mekong River.

As you have witnessed, our region is quite different today than it was four years ago when the last Summit was convened and even more so than 23 years ago when the MRC Countries gathered to sign the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

Over the last two decades, the Mekong region has experienced steady economic growth at a rate of 5 to 7 per cent. All the Member Countries of the MRC have boosted their regional integration through ASEAN, GMS and quite recently the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation framework, to name a few.

The level of momentum of trans-boundary cooperation, both between the Member Countries and with Dialogue Partners of China and Myanmar, and other stakeholders of the region – has been quite high.

At the same time, water demand throughout the Mekong region is also soaring. Growing economies, along with fast population growth, result in increasing pressures on the river's natural resources for irrigated agriculture, urbanization, industrialization, energy and food production. Additional water management and development projects are also in the pipeline.

Climate change is also taking its toll. Every year we witness the effects of flooding in the basin with casualties, millions of dollar worth of damage to property, crops and livelihoods. Scientists expect that other extreme events including drought and typhoons will be more unpredictable and recurrent as climate change takes its toll.

All these will bring about opportunities – but at the same time trans-boundary challenges— that can only be overcome through enhancing joint efforts and in cooperation with all relevant partners.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, in other words, the dire need for cooperation in sustainable management of the shared water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin has never before been more compelling than it is today. The findings of the Council Study have raised the stakes about the sustainability of the Mekong and we must together critically review and develop joint actions and solutions to address challenges.

And I'm pleased to say that the governments and organizations represented here today have come together to demonstrate our collective commitments to optimize opportunities and minimize challenges of the Mekong through the MRC.

We must address these issues together.

The MRC has been working tirelessly over the past 23 years to bring together the riparian countries and partners in the spirit of Mekong Cooperation to counter these and other trans-boundary challenges, as well as to ensure the proper development and management of the water and related resources of the basin.

The International Conference yesterday is yet another refreshing example that brought in hundreds of practitioners and policy makers around the region and the world to exchange perspectives, best practices and cutting-edge innovative ideas for the sustainable development of the Mekong basin. It was a highly desirable and successful event that produced fruitful results. The CEO will report on its key outcomes and messages after the report by JC Chair on the achievements for the implementation of Ho Chi Minh Declaration.

At today's meeting I look forward to hearing your views and recommendations on enhancing the joint efforts and partnerships and the contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals.

We will see how this will feed into tomorrow's discussions by Heads of the MRC Governments while they reiterate their commitment to the sustainable development of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin.

With that said, I now announce this MRC Ministerial Meeting for the 3rd MRC Summit open.

Thank you.