

Statement

by

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Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao PDR

Excellency Dr. Nguyen Linh Ngoc

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam

Distinguished Delegates, Dialogue Partners, Development Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to welcome Excellencies and all Distinguished Delegates to the 24th meeting of the MRC Council in Pattaya City. It is my honor to be here amongst this gathering of MRC colleagues who have been working and cooperating in developing our Lower Mekong Basin to be a region with sustainable uses of Mekong water resources, which is our commitment since the beginning of our Mekong Cooperation.

At our last 23 Council Meeting in Pak Se, Lao PDR, Thailand shared our concerns on various issues regarding to the Mekong basin, such as water - food - energy security, value added of MASAP, reliability of MRC flood forecasting, implementation of drought activities, transboundary impact assessment process, Council Study and knowledge center. Those issues are still considered challenges for all Member Countries and needed Council Members to direct the MRC Secretariat to speed up implementation to reach MRC goals. Our strong cooperation and commitment can contribute to the MRC to achieve the goals, to improve the livelihood of our people in the Mekong Basin, and to share benefits among us.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now we are well-aware that the economy in Lower Mekong Region has been rapidly growing in recent decades resulting in higher water demand among member countries, for example, cascade hydropower, agriculture, fisheries, etc., to support economic growth, as well as, to enhance people's well-being. Moreover, the uncertainties of

climate change can make the situation becoming more intense; thus, I strongly request Member Countries to realize and work more closely in order to set a vision, develop plan and strategy for our region. Today is our opportunity to set the 24th Meeting of the MRC Council as a platform in order to provide our guidance and valuable comments to the MRC as a guidance for further action.

Thailand would like to raise our concerns as follows:

Firstly, the Mekong Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (MASAP), MRC spent several years and budget to prepare this plan. Thailand's concerns are on the value added of MASAP to our region particularly its proposed action plan, some of which are still unclear. Therefore, Thailand suggests that there should be revision on the action plan which links to Strategic Priorities No. 5 and No. 6, as well as request the MRC Secretariat to hold further discussion before this activity will start in 2018. For Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy (BFMS), Thailand supports this activity, as it provides the strategic priorities for conserving fish habitat and transboundary fishery management. Thailand considers that fishery is transboundary resources, thus, fish abundant is an important information for the impact assessment of hydropower projects.

Secondly, the Study on the Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River including Impacts of Mainstream Hydropower Project as the 'Council Study', Thailand expects to have its output at the end of this year so that it could be used by Member Countries for further deliberation.

Thirdly, the MRC Annual Work Plan and decentralization, Thailand is still concerned about the MRC Annual Work Plan 2018. We see that there are various unclear activities which need to be revised and improved, such as some activities should be provided with more budgets, like monitoring activities, but some should be reduced.

In this regard, Thailand suggests to the MRC Secretariat that the budget spending should be in line with income as well as capacity of the MRC Secretariat for implementation and budgets on some activities should be reconsidered.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen

With our current circumstances in the Lower Mekong Basin, extended cooperation and coordination are necessary across our upper-lower Mekong border. Today, I am very pleased that our Dialogue Partners, China and Myanmar can attend this meeting with us.

As the two countries have good relationship with the MRC and a good friendship with Member Countries, we all can work together to build prosperity in the whole Mekong basin. In this regard, Thailand supports the activities of joint research on hydrological impact between China and the MRC, as well as, the continually sharing data and information. Moreover, the Member Countries should recognize that the achievements and the success of the MRC would not be possible without Development Partners which

the MRC receives constant supports and good cooperation.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen

Over the past twenty years, Member Countries have put much effort together to strengthen cooperation, knowledge transfer, data sharing. Therefore, I do hope this strengthening will be kept going on to achieve our goals for sustainable development, sustainable use and management of water in our Mekong River.

Thank you.