

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

STATEMENT
of H.E. Dr. Tran Hong Ha
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Viet Nam
Chairman of Viet Nam National Mekong Committee
Member of MRC Council for Viet Nam
Chairman of the MRC Council for 2018

*His Excellency Mr. Lim Kin Hor,
Minister of Water Resources and Meteorology of Cambodia
Chairman of Cambodia National Mekong Committee*

*His Excellency Mr. Sommad Pholsena,
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR
Chairman of Lao National Mekong Committee*

*His Excellency General Surasak Karnjanarat,
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand
Chairman of Thai National Mekong Committee*

*Distinguished Representatives of Dialogue and Development Partners
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great honor to attend this Ministerial Meeting with our Dialogue and Development Partners to prepare for the 3rd Summit of the Mekong River Commission in the ancient and beautiful city of Siem Reap.

First, allow me to join other Ministers of Member Countries in warmly welcoming all distinguished Representatives of the MRC Dialogue and Development Partners, and regional and international organizations.

I also wish to express my profound gratitude to the host country for their warm welcome and excellent hospitality accorded to myself and the Delegation of Viet Nam.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the past 23 years of our cooperation under the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the Mekong River Commission has steadily moved forward and achieved unprecedented successes, notably the shaping of a vision and key principles for a rational and equitable utilization of water resources in the Mekong River Basin, and identifying areas of top priority cooperation and providing relevant advice and recommendations on socio-economic development.

These successes were due to the efforts as well as the reliable collaboration of all Member Countries.

I also wish to make a special mention at this Meeting that our achievements so far spring not only from the close cooperation amongst Member Countries, but also from the untiring support from MRC Partners and regional communities.

Having said that, it is essential to remind ourselves of the challenges we are still facing in the Basin, especially due to the increasing utilization of water resources in the context of a changing climate.

As part of the greater Mekong Basin, the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam has been suffering increasingly adverse changes: historical drought, salinity intrusion, sediment loss, bank erosion, and soil subsidence, just to name a few.

Water and water related resources, is one of the fundamentals for the development of the Mekong Basin.

The sustainability of development of Mekong Basin and riparian countries, and even their existence, I believe, depend a great deal on our capabilities and willingness to join hand in concerted efforts for integrated and transboundary management and use of water and related resource, as well as assistance from donor communities.

At the same time, to meet its expectation, MRC needs to be practical, effective and consistent in its course and actions.

Thus, the topic of the meeting: “Enhancing Joint Efforts and Partnerships towards Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Mekong River Basin” could not be more timely.

Last week, the 6th Greater Mekong Sub-region Summit was successfully held in Hanoi. It provided a major reference point for the

region's midterm cooperation, initiated the development of a long-term vision for GMS cooperation, especially organized the first GMS Business Summit and adopted the Regional Framework 2022, which further promote the regional linkages and seamless connection through very concrete investment programs, projects in the regions.

MRC should seek to implement the essential guidance and agreements of GMS6 in a concrete, action oriented manner, within our relevant scope and frameworks, first and foremost the integrated water resources use and management in the Mekong Basin.

First, for MRC cooperation to be of substantial value, we need to strengthen trans-boundary cooperation and joint efforts in concrete programs and projects, especially in the sharing of data and information as well as common standard systems, creating real connections and linkages of economics and in the the sustainable and efficient management and utilization of water and related resources.

Second, from the viewpoint of effective integrated and sustainable water resources management, we need a clear cooperation mechanism between the MRC and Mekong–Lancang Cooperation for effective and well coordinated management of the Mekong River.

It is necessary to continue the sharing of information and data from hydro-met stations and the operation of hydropower dams towards developing and implementing joint projects.

As regional cooperation initiatives continue to grow, it is vital for the MRC to expand its cooperation and coordinated interactions with regional and international cooperation mechanisms.

Third, we need to:

- Enhance the capability of the Commission's Secretariat in facilitating the effective implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement,
- Continue to update the IWRM-based Basin Development Strategy,
- Use results of the recently completed Council Study in decision-making processes related to water resources development plans in the Basin,
- Strengthen and expand monitoring networks for timely proposals of appropriate measures to mitigate the impacts of development plans on the natural, economic and social environment in downstream areas.

Last but not least, while MRC is still a long way from achieving self-sufficiency status by 2030, I am calling on our Development Partners to extend their financial and technical assistance to MRC activities on the one hand, and on the other hand, to provide bilateral aid to member countries through a well-coordinated regional development mechanism to ensure effectiveness without duplication, as their top priority.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my firm belief that the Mekong River Commission, still widely regarded as the regional cooperation channel with the most solid legal foundation for sustainable development of water resources in the Mekong River Basin, together with other regional initiatives and MRC strategic partners, will continue to ensure further accomplishments of Member Countries in efficiently and sustainably utilizing water and related resources of the Basin for the benefits of all riparian countries and people.

I also believe that this Ministerial Meeting once again upholds our unity on issues prepared for the 3rd MRC Summit, especially the Siem Reap Declaration.

Lastly, my appreciation goes to the Cambodia National Mekong Committee and the MRC Secretariat for their excellent efforts in making this Meeting such a great success.

Thank you for your kind attention./.