

Welcome Address

By

H.E. General Surasak Karnjanarat

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Chairperson of Thai National Mekong Committee
Member of the MRC Council for Thailand
Chairperson of the MRC Council for 2017

Excellency Mr. Bun Hean (ฯพณฯ นายบุน เฮียน)

Secretary of State of Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, Cambodia

Excellency Madame Bounkham Vorachit (ฯพณฯ มาดามบุนค าวรจิต)

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Deputy Permanent Secretary

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Head of the Thai Delegation

Excellency Dr. Nguyen Linh Ngoc (ฯพณฯ ดร.เหงียน ลิน ึ่งอก)

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam

/ Distinguished...

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the MRC Council, I am delighted to warmly welcome you all to this Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the MRC Council in Pattaya City, Thailand.

First of all, please allow me to express my profound thanks and sincere appreciation to *His Excellency Mr. Sommad Pholsena* for his Chairmanship of the MRC Council for 2016 and the accomplishments achieved over the past year. We have benefited from his valuable advice and guidance. Let me also commend the MRC for its remarkable efforts to forge ahead crucial actions in addressing key strategic priorities set out in the First MRC Summit in Hua Hin, Thailand in 2010 and reaffirmed in the Second MRC Summit in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam in 2014.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The spirit of cooperation has always been the underlined principles of the work of the MRC. In this regards, stronger cooperation, joint efforts and partnerships are needed and will continue to be instrumental for the MRC during the coming years to effectively and efficiently address key basin-wide opportunities and challenges from extreme floods, droughts, climate change, water utilization, and impacts of development especially hydropower projects in the Mekong basin. It is important to maintain our determination, momentum and concerted commitment to the water-food-energy nexus.

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The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is another big challenge for all MRC Member Countries at both national and regional levels. To achieve these goals, I would like to reiterate that cooperation among MRC Countries and networking with other frameworks or initiatives are the key for success. I therefore, would like to ask the MRC Secretariat to speedy expedite the implementation of all activities under the Strategic Plan and the Annual Work Plan 2018 in line with adopted protocol and rules of procedure. The process of signing the MOU with ASEAN on Water and Disaster Management would be finalized in due course.

The implementation under the Mekong-Lancang framework shall base on the principles of balance treatment between national and regional levels as well as equity, and reciprocity among all parties. I would like to remind you that the MRC framework of the 1995 Mekong Agreement specifies that Member Countries shall take care of the impacts resulting from development projects together by jointly monitoring flow condition and implementing procedures and technical guidelines under MRC. I am sure that these issues will also be the focus of the upcoming MRC Summit 2018 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

As the Chairperson of the MRC Council for 2017, I would like to ask all of us to maintain these momentums and continue our commitment to tackle those existing challenges and turn them into new opportunities for success and prosperity of the Mekong River Basin.

/ Excellencies

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While addressing the challenges and opportunities of our region, I realized that the MRC implementation can significantly contribute to the regional prosperity and success. With this, Council Members have important roles to strengthen the MRC and supervising the MRC Secretariat towards a leaner, more efficient, and cost-effective organization in carrying out its various development and conservation tasks by implementing the priority activities of the Core River Basin Management Function, responding to country needs, and leave out any unnecessary activities. These will ensure our organization to be more resilient as set forth in 2030.

In regards to the cascade Hydropower Project on the Mekong mainstream, I understand that the current and common concern is on transboundary impact for which we need full collaboration among us to develop a sustainable and implementable plan for joint monitoring and assessment, sharing operational data, giving timely notification and consultation. This will ensure a minimal impact on people living along Mekong River caused by hydropower projects. Moreover, the Council Members have advised the MRC secretariat to complete the Council Study by the end of this year. Its outputs can be used to support the Member Countries for deliberation and decision-making on the balance treatment of economics, social and environment dimension.

When comparing to other frameworks in this region, the role of MRC is quite unique. One of its outstanding contributions to this region is the data and information management which have been conducted for more than fifty years. This strength can

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drive the MRC to be the “knowledge-hub” of this region. This is one of the commitments since the beginning of our lower Mekong Cooperation. In this connection, I would like to ask the MRC Secretariat to continue its work in this area to complete this task in supporting MRC to reach this goal.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to invite you all to actively and productively engage in our discussions and provide your practical input and guidance in relation to the important topics that are on our agenda today.

Allow me now to thank Thai National Mekong Committee Secretariat and the MRC Secretariat for their efforts in arranging this Meeting. I wish you every success in our sessions today.

With this, I would like to declare the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the MRC Council open.

Thank you. ขอขอบคุณ

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