

**SUMMARY
OF
MINUTES OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF
THE MRC COUNCIL
(SESSION 1)**

**MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION
29 November 2017 in Pattaya, Thailand**

GENERAL

1. The MRC Council held its Twenty-Fourth Meeting (hereinafter referred to as "The Meeting") on 29 November 2017 in Pattaya, Thailand. The proposed Programme and Agendas covered the following items:

- Cooperation between MRC and Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and other Partners
- Progress on the implementation of the Basin Development Strategy 2016-2020, including the implementation of the National Indicative Plans 2016-2020
- Consideration for approval of the final MCs' Contribution Formula
- Consideration for Approval of the MRC Annual Work Plan 2018
- Consideration for Approval of the Mekong Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (MASAP)
- Consideration for Approval of the Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy
- Consideration for Approval of the TOR for MRCS CEO

2. Session 1 of the Meeting was followed by a Session of the MRC Council with the Development Partners Consultative Group on the same date, 29 November 2017, at which other strategic matters were discussed. A separate Draft Minutes will be prepared for Session 2, the Joint Meeting with the MRC Development Partners Consultative Group. On 28 November 2017, Members of the MRC JC held a Preparatory Meeting to review the draft agenda and discuss issues of mutual concern prior to the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the MRC Council on 29 November 2017. On the morning of 29 November 2017, the Council held a Private Session to discuss matters of mutual interest prior to the Plenary Session.

B. WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE MRC COUNCIL FOR 2017

3. Expressing thanks and appreciation to the outgoing Council Chair, H.E. Mr. Sommad Pholsena for his Chairmanship and his accomplishments achieved over the past year, the Chairperson recalled the strategic priorities set out in the First MRC Summit in Hua Hin, Thailand in 2010 and reaffirmed in the HCMC Declaration in 2014, noting while cooperation has always been a core aspect and catalyst to sustainably set the development and management of the Mekong resources in motion, even more strategic cooperation and joint efforts and partnership are crucial at this time of climate uncertainty and this fast-moving world. The Chairperson briefed the Meeting on each of the agendas tabled for the discussions today. As a conclusion, the Chairperson invited all the participants for their active discussions and meaningful engagement and thanked the MRC and TNMC Secretariats for their efforts in organising the Meeting and declared the Meeting open.

C. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4. The Chairperson sought comments and suggestions from the floor on the agenda for the Meeting. The Agenda was adopted as proposed (Appendix No.1.1: Agenda).

D. MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

D.1 Cooperation between MRC and Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and other Partners

5. Reporting to the Meeting on the cooperation of Development Partners since October this year, the Secretariat brought to the Meeting's attention its expectation to have the pledged fund from EU of EUR 5 million for 2018-2021; the Mekong-Japan cooperation on the watershed management and environmental conservation in the Basin; and its achievement to secure 93% (~60.4 million) of its funding needs of 65 million. For cooperation with the Dialogue Partners, the Secretariat updated the Meeting on the white paper, revising the part on Myanmar as per the request by the JC since its 45th Meeting in Luang Prabang, but it won't be submitted to the JC until March 2018. Technical visit and exchange by Chinese delegation to Cambodia and Thailand, Joint Symposium on Capacity Building and Experience Sharing on Sediment Control and Management for River Dams and Joint Research with China on Hydrological impacts of the Lancang hydropower cascade on downstream Extreme events as well as the visit by the Secretariat to Myanmar to participate in its Inception Workshop of the Myanmar Ayeyarwady State of Basin Assessment in June 2017 to share MRC's state of basin monitoring and reporting experiences have also been briefed to the Meeting. In addition, the MRC Secretariat has continued to maintain collaboration and partnerships with other regional and international organizations including ASEAN, Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) mechanism – MOU with the Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center is under discussion, Mississippi River Commission (MiRC), Korean Development Institute (KDI), Morocco – action plan is under preparation, and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) – MOA is under discussion. The Secretariat sought guidance by the Council in particular on the action plan with Morocco and collaboration with UN-ESCAP.

6. The Meeting took note of the progress reported by the Secretariat.

D.2 Progress on the implementation of the Basin Development Strategy (BDS) 2016-2020, including the implementation of the National Indicative Plans 2016-2020

7. Providing the Meeting with some background of the BDS, the Secretariat noted a Regional Meeting on the dissemination of the NIPs conducted on 1 September 2016 with participation of many Development Partners (DPs) suggested some national activities be re-considered or combined. While some DPs are interested in supporting the funding gaps in implementing decentralized activities of Cambodia and Lao PDR (on a bilateral basis), most DPs are interested in further development of the joint projects (JPs). The NIPs for 2016-2020 have collectively identified five JPs, in which Member Countries (MCs) agreed to work together. Containing key basin-wide challenges, the JPs involve strategic assessment and cooperation in establishing a strategy and plan for investment in the sustainable development and management of those areas of the basin. A Promotional Report of the identified JPs has been prepared to describe the five JPs, to which the Project Information Notes (PINs) have been annexed. As of June 2017, the Secretariat has received the approval for the Promotional Report from all the MCs. So far, German Development Cooperation (GIZ) has initially committed to providing technical and financial supports for the planning components of two JPs, namely 1) JP between Lao PDR and Cambodia on "Cross-border water resources development and management, including environmental impact monitoring of Don Sahong hydropower project" and 2) JP between Cambodia and Thailand on "transboundary cooperation for flood and drought management in Thai-Cambodian border area – a part of 9C-9T sub-area". The Secretariat was proposing to use the basket fund to support the implementation of two planning components of two other JPs for the MRC Annual Work Plan (AWP) 2018 including 1) JP between Lao PDR and Thailand on "Lao-Thai Safety Regulations for Navigation", and 2) JP between Cambodia and Viet Nam on the "Integrated flood Management in the border area of Cambodia and Viet Nam in the Mekong Delta for Water Security and Sustainable Development". The Secretariat will also support the MCs in integrating the NIP M&E into the common MRC SP & NIP M&E framework.

8. The Meeting took note of the progress on the Basin Development Strategy reported by the Secretariat.

E. Matters for Consideration

E.0 Consideration for approval of the final MCs' Contributions Formula

9. Reporting on the result of the discussions in the JC Preparatory Meeting the day before, the Secretariat informed the Council three countries have already reached a consensus on the Annual Contribution from 2019 by maintaining the Current Option C.3, while one country was still considering. The Secretariat then briefly provided more details of the Option C.3 for the Council information which the total contribution will change 1% every 3 years toward equal contribution in 2030 (with the remaining 10% increase every year in dollar value). The 1% change will start from year 2019 to 2021, which means that Cambodia and Lao PDR contribution will move up from 20% to 21% respectively. In contrast, Thailand and Viet Nam contributions will be reduced from 30% to 29% during these 3 years, and this 1% change for every 3 years will continue till 2030, when each Member Country will contribute 25% equally onward.

10. The Meeting approved the contributions formula C.3 as proposed by the Secretariat.

E.1 Consideration for Approval of the MRC Annual Work Plan 2018

11. Briefing the Meeting on some of the contents of the AWP 2018, especially the key outputs and activities, the Secretariat reported to the Meeting on the outcome of the JC discussions the day before and sought approval by the Council on its AWP 2018. The Secretariat noted that further information and clarification were provided to the JC which then endorsed the AWP with a note that for two items, namely the budget for international consultants for hydropower strategy would be reduced and the use of contingency would be only for approved AWP items with clear and detailed reporting to the Budget Committee and Joint Committee.

12. The Meeting approved ad referendum the MRC Annual Work Plan 2018.

E.2 Consideration for Approval of the Mekong Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (MASAP)

13. For this agenda item, the Secretariat recalled the background of the MASAP including its formulation process. The Secretariat then reported on the 4th and Final draft of the MASAP as a result of consolidation of the comments from the Regional Stakeholder Forum and Regional Consultation Workshop, Lao PDR in June 2017 and the regional consultation in Siem Reap recently in October 2017 respectively. The Final document has addressed the last comments from the Member Countries and sent back to them in October 2017. An action plan has been developed for the implementation of the MASAP, including the activities with their respective timeframes and monitoring indicators and the identification of the relevant stakeholders and their roles and responsibilities. Dynamic Strategy, the MASAP will be updated every five years following the MRC strategic planning cycle.

14. Cambodia, Lao PDR and Viet Nam approved the MASAP, while Thailand approved ad referendum the MASAP, pending corrections and updates to be in line with comments provided by Thailand during the JC Preparatory Meeting on 28th November 2017. Lao PDR suggested the Secretariat discuss the Action Plan in more detail with the Member Countries.

E.3 Consideration for Approval of the Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy

15. Providing the history of the mentioned Strategy including the process of preparation, consultations and revisions during the period from 2013-2016, the Secretariat has come up with the Final draft of the BFMS and shared with all the Member Countries for final review between January-May 2017. After intensive reviews, all the Member Countries have confirmed their agreements with the contents of the Final draft of the Strategy and agreed for the Secretariat to submit it to the MRC Joint Committee and Council for endorsement and approval, respectively. As a result, the Strategy was approved by the MRC JC at its 46th Meeting on 21 August 2017 and the Secretariat thus sought approval by the Council at this Meeting.

16. The Meeting approved the Basin-wide Fisheries Management and Development Strategy 2018-2022.

E.4 Consideration for Approval of the TOR for MRCS CEO

17. Reporting on the result of the discussions at the JC Preparatory Meeting for 24th MRC Council Meeting the day before, the Secretariat sought approval of the TOR endorsed by the JC for the subsequent CEO of the Secretariat for its further timely arrangements.

18. The Meeting approved the TOR of the MRCS CEO.