

CONCEPT NOTE FOR
THE 7TH MRC REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER FORUM
“MEKONG TRANSBOUNDARY INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT”
20-21, MAY 2019
SOFITEL BANGKOK SUKHUMVIT HOTEL, BANGKOK, THAILAND

OVERVIEW

The Mekong River Commission was established as a multi-lateral cooperation mechanism between the four Lower Mekong Basin countries (MC) of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam by signing the 1995 *Agreement on Co-operation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin* (the Mekong Agreement). This multi-lateral cooperation has enabled the four countries to work together with the mission of promotion and coordination of the sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the people's well-being.

At the MRC Summit in 2010, the political leaders of the four MCs committed to an ambitious vision, such that by 2030, the core work of MRC would be financed solely by MCs. This triggered the most comprehensive institutional reform to date, starting in 2015, with the aim of transitioning to a leaner and more efficient organisational structure. Three years on, the MRC has a Riparian CEO for the second time, the decentralisation of certain water resource management activities to the National governments has been implemented with evidence of strong uptake in some areas and challenges in other areas. The decentralization reforms are resulting in evolving changes to responsibilities for National Mekong Committees and National Water Ministries to address new challenges including strengthening capacity and autonomy within country to sustainably manage water resources.

The cooperation with Dialogue Partners (China and Myanmar) is continually being strengthened through data and information sharing, joint technical symposiums, exchange visits and improved engagement with other regional mechanisms including ASEAN and the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) continues. There is a growing interest to better understand the options for improving cooperation efficiency and effectiveness within the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) via bi-lateral, trilateral, and other mechanisms, and between the LMB and the MLC.

Transboundary dialogue between the Mekong's riparian countries can help reduce tension and increase cooperation across borders for better management of the shared water resources. Launched in 2014, the four-member countries of the Mekong River Commission – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam – have been working together on five bilateral initiatives to strengthen transboundary dialogue and promote the integrated water resources management practice at the sub-basin level. The initiatives are part of the MRC Mekong Integrated Water Resources Management (M-IWRM) Project that is funded by the World Bank and technically supported by the Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

Fisheries, wetland, Mekong-delta, lake and river basin management were selected topics for the member countries to work together on building a common understanding of key transboundary issues, negotiating durable solutions and sharing the practices from the counterpart's experiences.



Overseen by the MRC member countries, the five transboundary projects under the M-IWRM project were completed in early 2019 with the following key outputs: (1) joint issues papers, (2) analysis of cooperation mechanism options and (3) transboundary joint action plans. This project has established key examples of IWRM principles in the LMB at the regional, national and sub-national levels, thus contributing to more sustainable river basin development in the Lower Mekong. The process has fostered a greater common understanding on transboundary issues and supported a consensus based approach to establish joint management strategies to address the priority transboundary water sector issues.

In line with its mandate, the MRC has also prioritized the pursue of joint projects through its refreshed strategic planning cycle. In response to the updated IWRMbased Basin Development Strategy for 2016-2020, the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) countries have prioritized the following five joint projects: Lao-Thai safety regulations for navigation, environmental impact monitoring of Don Sahong hydropower project, Transboundary cooperation for flood and drought management in Thai-Cambodian border area, Sustainable water resources development and management in the Sekong, Sesan and Srepok river basins (3S Basin), and Integrated flood management in the border area of Cambodia and Viet Nam in the Mekong Delta.

For more information, please visit the MRC website at www.mrcmekong.org

OBJECTIVES

The forum's primary objective is to consider new transboundary partnerships and arrangements (cooperation mechanisms) for the LMB to support sustainable development and management of water resources. A sub-objective of the forum is to share the lesson learned from the M-IWRM project in regards to potentially new and innovative transboundary cooperation arrangements, including their benefits and implementation challenges.

PARTICIPANTS

The forum expects to have around 200 participants from various groups as following:

- MRC's Member Countries
- The World Bank and MRC Development partners
- Government, non-government, research institutes and Universities
- International water management institutions
- Interested Civil Society Organizations
- Local authorities and communities
- Other interested groups
- MRC Secretariat

Noted that number of participants can be adjusted according to available budget

DATE AND VENUE

20-21 May 2019 at Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand

REGISTRATION

Inviting participants will be invited by the MRC Secretariat. Other participants wishing to participate in the forum are requested to register in advance using the MRC website at www.mrcmekong.org

There is no registration fee to attend this forum.

EXHIBITION

Throughout the forum, there will be exhibition on related topics to the objective of the forum from the MRC and other organizations. Other river basin organizations are invited to exhibit their work and achievements at the forum's exhibition. Further information about the exhibition will be further developed.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

English will be official language throughout the forum.

FORUM PROGRAM

The forum will be organized for two days as following:

DAY 1: 20 May 2019

Schedule	Program
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome remarks by the Secretary-General of National Office of Water Resources Opening remarks by the MRCS CEO
09:30 – 10:00	Keynote Speaker – International example transboundary water resource governance
10:00 – 10:30	Mekong River Commission and transboundary dialogue by the MRC Secretariat
10:30 – 10:45	Break
10:45 – 11:45	Panel session on understanding the Mekong transboundary cooperation – past, present and future
11:45 – 12:00	Introduction of the MRC Mekong Integrated Water Resources Management transboundary project by the MRC Secretariat
12:00 -13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:30	Parallel sessions on establishing LMB transboundary cooperation mechanisms to support sustainable water resources management. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group I: Wetland and lake management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement, challenges and lessons learnt from Nam Kam-Xe bang Hieng wetland project and Songkhla- Tonle Sap lake project - Experiences from Inle Lake management, Myanmar - Panel discussion: exchange experience between regions on Lake and wetland management • Group II: Fisheries management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement, challenges and lessons learnt from Mekong-Sekong transboundary fisheries management project - Lessons learnt from transboundary fisheries management in the bordering of Bokeo in Lao and Chiang Rai in Thailand - Panel discussion: exchange experience between regions on transboundary fisheries management
14:30 – 15:00	Break
15:30 – 16:00	Reflection from parallel discussion
16:00 – 17:00	MRC Joint Project Initiatives by the MRC Secretariat
17:00-17:15	Conclusion of Day 1

DAY 2: 21 May 2019

Schedule	Program
09:00 – 09:15	Day 1 recap and introduction for Day 2
09:15 – 10:30	Updated on national capacity on water resources management: status, challenges, potential MRC role and way forward in next 10 years - <i>Presentation from the MRC member countries</i>

10:30 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:00	Panel discussion on using science to support trans-boundary decision making processes
12:00 – 13:15	Lunch
13:15-13:45	Lessons learned from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IUCN Building River Dialogue and Governance in the Sekong, Sesan and Sre Pok river basins (BRIDGE 3S) • Oxfam Mekong Water Governance Program
13:45 – 15:30	LMB transboundary cooperation mechanisms: identifying priority issues to setting out an action plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overview of the Sesan-Srepok River Basin and Mekong Delta transboundary projects - Panel session on lessons learned and challenges ahead
15:30 – 15:45	Break
15:45 – 16:45	Panel session on strengthening implementation of transboundary cooperation mechanisms: resources, monitoring and reporting
16:45 – 17:20	Summary key messages from the forum and way forward
17:20 – 17:30	Closing of forum