



LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE CURRENT BDS AND APPROACH TO PREPARING THE BDS 2021-2030 AND SP 2021-2025

THE 9TH MRC REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER FORUM

DAY 2: PREPARATION OF BASIN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021-2030 AND MRC STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

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Part 1

Lessons learned in implementing the current Basin Development Strategy

The implementation of the BDS 2016-2020 resulted in a number of important lessons. They have been used to prepare the BDS 2021-2030

A focus on traditional basin planning is not sufficient

- During 2016-2020, communities in various parts of the Mekong River Basin were confronted with unusual or **rapidly changing flow conditions and water-related emergencies** (including a dam breach)
- In most cases, it took too long for national and regional water management agencies to clearly communicate to the public what was happening and how they were **responding to the situation**
- With increasing development and erratic climate events, the **number of water-related incidents** is likely to rise
- Since many incidents may have transboundary impacts, river basin coordinators (such as the MRC) will **NEED to focus increasingly on coordination of basin management and operational issues**

Reactive regional planning is likely to lead to sub-optimal outcomes

- Regional planning that only assesses impact of existing national plans, and recommends not implementing certain projects, is unlikely to be accepted by national governments:
 - **NEED** to offer also other possible options and projects
- While MRC has succeeded in working with countries to **change the design of some infrastructure projects** to minimize negative impacts, current national plans have not been changed over several MRC planning cycles
- This is largely due to a failure to identify a regional plan capable of producing higher regional benefits and lower regional costs
- Breaking this cycle of only reacting to established plans, to proactively identify **alternative pathways** that achieve higher benefits across sectors and between countries, is critical to the Mekong River Basin vision

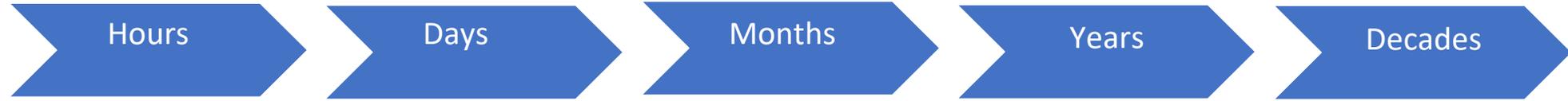
The scope of issues and challenges faced by basin countries is basin-wide

- The development of basin water resources is having increasingly evident transboundary effects. This is illustrated in rapid water level fluctuations, diminished sediment flows, and a change in the annual hydrograph
- Future developments, including for flood and drought risk reduction, will further augment these changes
- Managing these changes in the most effective way possible can only be done through:
 - Cooperation between all six riparian countries,
 - Requiring a strategy applicable to the entire basin and
 - To guide the actions of all relevant actors towards common goals.

Better use could be made of existing data

- A substantial amount of data has been collected over many years by the Member Countries and the MRCS
- However, the value of this data is limited without **effective data management systems and tools** in place
- A lack of integration and **harmonisation** between regional and national systems introduces inefficiencies and difficulty accessing information and data when it is needed.
- The application of new technology is part of the solution:
 - Using **compatible and modern decision support systems (DSS)**
 - Connected to **monitoring stations, earth observation data providers, and other data centres** to support water management

Examples of water resources development and management products that a modern DSS can support



Solutions

- On-line monitoring
- Flash flood forecasting
- Real-time control
- Emergency management
- Flood forecasting and early warning
- Navigation guidance
- Repository of water-related data

- Hydrology assessments for water usages
- Reservoir operation
- Water allocation
- Seasonal forecasting
- Drought management
- Reservoir sedimentation management
- Optimization of hydropower operations
- Annual water accounts

- Assessment of development scenarios and projects
- Infrastructure development
- Water and environmental planning
- Climate change adaptation
- Water quality management
- River sediment management



An alternative approach to decentralised monitoring is necessary

- The approach to the **decentralisation of core river basin function monitoring activities** over 2016-2020 focused on the handover of both:
 - the operational aspects of data collection, processing and analysis
 - and the financial responsibility for those activities to individual implementing agency budgets within Member Countries
- This approach has been found to be unsustainable and requires a re-think. A better approach would involve:
 - the **complete decentralisation of data collection functions**, while
 - **maintaining a regional approach** to the management of a core monitoring network for the mainstream with financial support provided by Member Country contributions to the MRC budget

The strategies and action plans of all relevant actors need to be aligned to achieve the BDS Outcomes

- To achieve the basin vision and goals, **ALL water resource management actors** need to be working towards **common objectives**
- Without this **alignment**, the BDS outcomes can only ever be partially achieved
- The MRC Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is therefore fully integrated through its **results chain** with the BDS and the impact pathway from activity to outcome is more fully described (*vision → strategic priorities → outcomes → outputs → activities*)
- The contribution to BDS outcomes by **other regional organizations and initiatives** has been more explicitly identified

Need to inform the public in a timely manner

- **Unbalanced, biased and incorrect statements and journalism** on water-related issues in social and other media are an increasing concern for the basin countries and the MRC
- **Misinformation is contributing to conflicting perceptions** across stakeholder groups, feeding mistrust and affecting regional relations
- To mitigate this situation, MRCS, in collaboration with key actors, such as MLC Water Center and basin countries, **NEED to provide:**
 - **timely factual and even-handed information** in traditional and social media on the actual situation in the basin
 - the **causes of changes** and possible impacts
 - and how they are **responding** to unusual water-related issues

Country-to-country capacity building could be improved

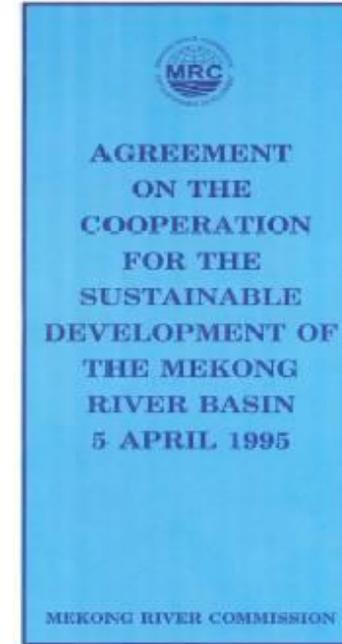
- The capacity of some countries to effectively oversee the large-scale water infrastructure being developed and operated in their territories is insufficient
- This capacity needs to be urgently developed to ensure that the infrastructure is in good condition when concession agreements come to an end (and loans are repaid) and greater economic benefits to the countries can be realised
- There is also a need for increased capacity in planning and management of many water-related sectors
- Different human and technical capacity among basin countries provides an opportunity for greater use of country-to-country knowledge sharing and capacity building

Part 2

Approach to preparing the BDS 2021-2030 and the SP 2021-2025

Purpose of the BDS 2021-2030

- The BDS sets out how water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin will be utilised, managed and conserved over the period 2021-2030
- For the 4 Lower Mekong River Basin countries the BDS is in-line with their commitment to the 1995 Mekong Agreement
- The BDS is consistent with the objectives of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) in the area of water cooperation, involving all 6 basin countries



Statement of the Ministerial Meeting of Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation

H.E. Bun Hean, Secretary of State, Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, the Kingdom of Cambodia, H.E. E Jingping, Minister of Water Resources, the People's Republic of China, H.E. Namad Pholsena, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Lao People's Democratic Republic, H.E. Win Khant, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, H.E. Tewan Liptapallop, Minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office, the Kingdom of Thailand, H.E. Le Cong Thanh, Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, gather in Beijing, China, for the Ministerial Meeting of Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation.

...calling that in order to contribute to the economic and social development of sub-regional countries, enhance the well-being of our peoples, narrow the development gap among our countries, support ASEAN Community building, promote the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and advance South-South cooperation, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) has jointly been established by our six countries in March 2016, in recognition of

Preparation of BDS 2021-2030

General Approach

- Development of a narrative of the Basin Vision toward 2040
- Based on the Vision, 10-year strategic priorities and outcomes (2021 - 2030) and outputs (2021-2025) are developed to achieve the vision
- The MRC, through implementation of its Strategic Plan, will deliver many BDS Outputs at the regional level
- The LMB countries will prepare a National Indicative Plans (NIP) to implement the BDS at the national level, capturing the benefits from regional cooperation



CONCEPT NOTE

Updating of Basin Development Strategy 2021-2030

12 June 2019

1. Introduction

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)-based Basin Development Strategy (BDS) was firstly developed in 2011 with a five-year planning cycle for 2011-2015, followed by the updated BDS 2016-2020.

The BDS is a statement of the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) countries setting out how they will utilize, manage and conserve the water and related resources of the Mekong in line with the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin (the 1995 Mekong Agreement). It provides regional perspectives for development opportunities and management of the basin. It also responds to the goals, objectives and underlying principles of the 1995 Mekong Agreement. The BDS is an instrument for basin planning and cooperation.

Since 2011, the BDS has been implemented at regional and national levels through its MRC Strategic Plan (MRC SP) and the four National Indicative Plans (NIPs) for 2011-2015 and 2016-2020, respectively. Currently, the plans are being implemented for 2016-2020.

For the next planning cycle, the update of the BDS will adopt the approach of shared vision planning which includes the development of long-term vision toward 2040 to reflect the recommendations of the MRC Council Study entitled "Study on Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River including Impacts of Mainstream Hydropower Projects." With the 20-year vision, the BDS will identify the strategic priorities for the development and management of the basin for the duration of 10 years to guide the development of the MRC SP and NIPs for two short-terms of 5 years for 2021-2025 and 2026-2030. In this regard, the next BDS will be developed for a span of ten years (2021-2030).

This concept note is developed to serve as a roadmap to guide the update of the BDS 2021-2030, including overall framework, scope, approach, mechanisms, processes, outputs, and activities and timeframe. It has been incorporated inputs from internal discussion with Divisions of the MRC Secretariat as well as consultations with Member Countries through Expert Group of Basin Planning (EGBP) conducted on 13 May, and 06 June 2019, respectively. At the EGBP meeting, the term "Sustainable" was requested to add to BDS.

2. Roadmap to update the Sustainable Basin Development Strategy (SBDS) 2021-2030

The roadmap describes overall framework, scope, approach, mechanisms, processes, outputs, and activities and timeframe.

Approach to develop BDS 2021-2030

- Progress made in implementing **strategic priorities of BDS 2016-2020**
- Status and trends of the basin based on the **2018 MRC State of Basin Report**
- Scenario assessments of the **MRC Council Study** to understand the trade-offs to develop a 20-year shared vision and shape the 10-year strategic priorities
- **National and regional perspectives** and alignment between them
- Strategic priorities of **MRC Sectoral Strategies** including MASAP, BFMS, Navigation Masterplan, SHDS, DMS, SBEM
- A review of water-related strategies and plans of **regional organizations, initiatives and programmes**, and mapping of priority areas relevant to achieving BDS outcomes
- Contributions from member countries, dialogue partners, development partners, other cooperation mechanisms, private sector and broader stakeholders

Contents of BDS 2021-2030

1. Introduction
2. Water resources management and development
3. Trends & long-term outlook: environment, social, economic and climate change
4. Strategic needs, risks and responses
5. Basin development pathway
 - Vision toward 2040
 - Sustainable development opportunities toward 2030
 - Sustainable development goals (SDGs)
 - Strategic priorities for basin development & management toward 2030
 - Basin Development Strategy results chain: outcomes and outputs
6. Implementation of the Strategy



**Basin Development Strategy
for the
Mekong River Basin**

2021 - 2030

Complete First Draft of Part I

1 January 2020

Purpose of SP 2021-2025

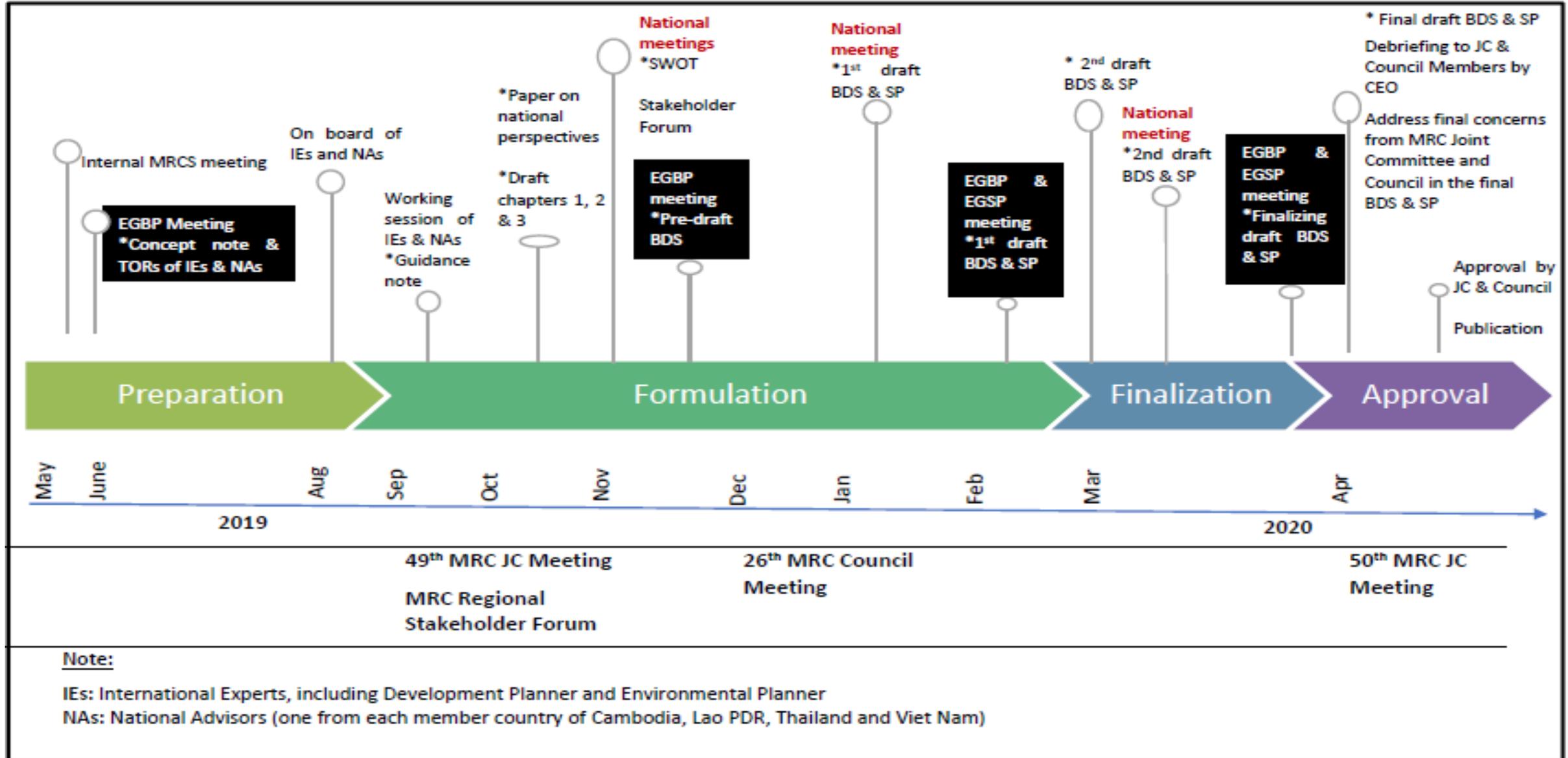
This SP sets out how the MRC will implement the BDS and strengthen the organization over the next five years:

- **The MRC will coordinate the implementation of the BDS and deliver many of its Outputs, some of which in cooperation with other regional cooperation networks**
- The MRC will implement an organisational development plan to:
 - Strengthen the MRC (organization and operations)
 - support national implementation of core river basin management functions and
 - transition towards regional planning and management processes that are embedded in the national planning, decision-making and governance systems, and funded by the basin countries

Approach to preparation of MRC SP 2021-2025

- This SP is fully aligned with the BDS 2021-2030
- The SP extends the BDS strategic priorities, outcomes and outputs with activities, required resources, and implementation arrangements
- Besides the BDS, the SP will take into account:
 - The recommendations from the **mid-term review of the SP 2016-2020**
 - The institutional direction established by the **MRC Decentralization Roadmap**
 - Contributions from member countries, dialogue partners, development partners, other cooperation mechanisms, broader stakeholders

Process



Thank you

