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Lao National Mekong Committee

Lao National Mekong Committee Secretariat
01000, Khounboulom Road, Chanthabouly District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR
Tel: (856-21) 260 983; Fax: (856-21) 260 984; Email: laonmcs@gmail.com/laonmcs@hotmail.com

Statement
by Lao National Mekong Committee
at the Special Session of the MRC Joint Committee
for the Luang Prabang Hydropower Project Prior Consultation
30th June 2020, via Video Conference

The Joint Committee Member of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) met at a Special Session on 30 June 2020 via video conference to discuss the Luang Prabang Hydropower Project submitted by Lao PDR for Prior Consultation process.

On behalf of Lao PDR, a Lao delegation headed by Mr. Chanthanet Boualapa, Secretary General of the Lao National Mekong Committee, and Member of the Joint Committee for Lao PDR, attended this Special Session of the MRC Joint Committee.

Lao PDR submitted the proposed Luang Prabang Hydropower Project (LPHPP) to the Mekong River Commission Secretariat for the period of 6 months of the Prior Consultation process on 31 July 2019, which has been fulfilled since 8th April 2020.

Having participated in the process and considering the official Reply Forms submitted by all three notified countries and the Technical Review Report, the Lao Government represented by the Lao National Mekong Committee would like to make the following statement:

Lao PDR as always, expresses its sincere thanks and appreciation to all MRC Member Countries and concerned stakeholders for their suggestions, recommendations, and good will aiming at improving the Project. Among the many important issues raised by the Member Countries, the major issues revolved around dam safety, sediment flow and social impacts.

Relating to the dam safety issues, Lao PDR considers dam safety to be of the utmost importance, because in case of dam failure the major impacts will occur in Lao territory. Thus, Lao PDR has revised its new Dam Safety Guidelines which meet and even exceed international standards, and all new projects including the LPHPP must conform to these more stringent guidelines where applicable. However, it should be noted that under its current design, the LPHPP design parameters and standards meet the requirements provided by ICOLD guidelines used throughout the world.

Regarding the sediment flow, all related information and data sources for sediment will be shared and exchanged with the MRC Secretariat for further improvement and reference. From an engineering perspective, based on hydraulic model tests and sediment model calculations the three low-level sediment flushing outlets provided at the spillway of the LPHPP are sufficient to meet the required guidelines, thereby allowing sediments to flow unrestricted downstream.

Lastly, Lao PDR is committed to the wellbeing and future of its people, and all social impacts must be thoroughly mitigated. To ensure this, effective monitoring and management will be required through the formation of a Social and Environmental M&M unit in which the Lao Government will directly provide guidance to the Project. Lao PDR is happy to share any findings and lessons learnt with Member Countries.

The Lao Government is grateful to the MRCS and its panel of experts in the production of the Technical Review Report (TRR) during the PNPCA process. All the findings and recommendations have been carefully reviewed. Detailed comments and further explanations have been provided, which can be reviewed in the final TRR. It is our sincere hope that MRC Secretariat and Member Countries will take note and acknowledge the perspectives and responses from Lao PDR. For the key recommendations of the TRR, Lao PDR will take all concerned issues into consideration and implement them where possible.

As the notifying country, Lao PDR has provided its full cooperation, including submitting all relevant and detailed project documents, assessment reports and additional data and information based on requests from the MRC Member Countries and panel of experts. Lao PDR appreciates the close working engagement between the MRC Secretariat and its line ministry. This working mechanism has helped build a deeper understanding among our teams and will provide a sound basis for future cooperation.

Lao PDR believes that the PNPCA process under the care of the MRC Secretariat is rare anywhere in the world and thus makes the Mekong cooperation very significant and an outstanding example for other international rivers.

Finally, the Government of Lao PDR remains committed to addressing key concerns and welcomes further engagement, information sharing, site visits and joint monitoring to ensure that the Project does not cause significant transboundary impacts, but provides direct and indirect benefits to all parties and stakeholders.

Thank you very much