

RECORD OF THE TWENTY-THIRD DIALOGUE MEETING

GENERAL

1. The MRC's Twenty-Third Dialogue Meeting (the Meeting) was held on 05 September 2019 back-to-back with the Forty-Ninth Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

2. The Meeting was chaired by **Dr. Le Duc Trung**, Director General, Viet Nam National Mekong Committee, Member of the MRC Joint Committee for Viet Nam, Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2019. The Chairperson was assisted by the Chief Executive Officer of the MRC Secretariat (the CEO). The Meeting was attended by 73 participants from all the MRC Member Countries, the People's Republic of China and Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and Directors and other concerned Staff of the MRC Secretariat (**Annex 1: List of Participants**).

A. Opening Address by the Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2019

3. The Chairperson welcomed with pleasure delegates from all the Member Countries and Dialogue Partners, to the Twenty-Third Dialogue Meeting and thanked for their participation. Hailing as one of the most exciting parts in the MRC's relations with its Dialogue Partners, the Chairperson highlighted a few remarkable activities achieved following the official visit to China of the MRCS CEO. The Chairperson then recalled other agenda items put forward for the Meeting including the proposal of cooperation between the organization and its Partners and encouraged meaningful discussions to bring the current cooperation to another level. The Chairperson thanked all the participants for their productive engagement and increased cooperation on the work of the MRC and the Secretariat for their excellent preparation and coordination to make the Meeting a success.

B. Statement by the Head of Delegation for the People's Republic of China (Annex 2)

C. Statement by the Head of Delegation for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Annex 3)

Adoption of the Agenda

4. The Chairperson sought comments on the agenda from the floor. The Meeting adopted the agenda (**Annex 4: Adopted Agenda**).

D. Achievements since the 22nd Dialogue Meeting (presented by the Chief Executive Officer of the MRC Secretariat)

5. The MRCS CEO reported to the Meeting a few key accomplishments made by the Secretariat since the 22nd Dialogue Meeting November last year, including China's agreement to continue sharing its hydrological data with the Commission to contribute to more effective river monitoring and flood forecasting in the Member Countries, the "observer status" the MRCS has received to attend the Annual Meetings of the MLC's Joint Working Group on Water Resources; the near-completion Joint Research on Hydrological Impacts of the Lancang Hydropower Cascade on Downstream Flood and Droughts; the MRC's participation in important meetings and workshops organized by China and the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation framework; China's agreement to work together with the Secretariat on a high-level visit to China by the MRC Ministerial Council of water and environment from the four countries. The CEO also expressed his delight to see the successful relaunch of JRPs project with young professionals from the MCs and Dialogue Partners coming to work, learn and contribute their knowledge and experience at the Secretariat.

E. Information on the Hydrological Conditions in the Mekong Basin (presented by MRC)

6. The Secretariat reported to the meeting on the general hydrological conditions in the LMB for the period from April to July 2019. The key findings are: the southwest Monsoon of 2019 arrived very late compared to previous years and on average timing of average conditions; most areas in the upper half of the LMB experienced drier conditions compared with their average; the flow conditions in the Mekong River during the beginning of 2019 wet season (as of July) were extremely below magnitudes; the reverse flows to the Tonle Sap Lake of 2019 started at the beginning of June, similar period of 2018, but with very subtle volume; the state of Mekong flow (as of July 2019) can be characterized as the “exceptionally regional low-flow”; below or normal rainfall is predicted in the region, the prevailing Southwest Monsoon conditions are expected to continue until October 2019 and heavy rainfall has a high chance to occur in August and September; and it is anticipated that flows in the Mekong will be around average conditions in the upper part. Whilst in the lower part the flows will be above or around average conditions. Without consecutively heavy storm events, the Mekong flows in most locations are likely to maintain their current stages.

7. Thailand informed the meeting of difficulties experienced in recent drought spell and appreciated the hydrological information sharing by China. Given the past experience from the droughts, Thailand viewed it is critical that good sharing of hydrological information for the Lower Mekong Basin be done in a clear and specific mechanism.

8. Cambodia appreciated the presentation of the hydrological information by the Secretariat which helps clear some doubts and provided some views. Cambodia encouraged joint efforts by concerned stakeholders regarding droughts and flood management, especially the kind information sharing by China. Cambodia viewed dam operations also play an important role in this droughts and flood management efforts by the MRC Member Countries, thus suggesting that a synergy be made not only in the information sharing but also dam operations to prevent droughts, flash flood, bank collapse and erosion. Cambodia suggested a further study on the impact of lower flow to fish migration.

9. Lao PDR viewed rainfall and flow information analysis are important as far as drought is concerned. Thus, it is crucial to set up a clear mechanism among all the stakeholders when it comes to the information sharing. Lao PDR noted that flood or drought was not only the man-made phenomenon but also the change of physical morphology of the river and many other natural phenomena including low rainfall and other such things. Lao PDR suggested to improve our cooperation mechanism for data and information sharing.

10. Viet Nam appreciated the information sharing through the presentation by the Secretariat, which helps explain many things related to droughts. Noting difficulties caused by the droughts, Viet Nam viewed information exchange and report sharing are critically important. Viet Nam looked forward to in-depth analysis of flow, including the information on the tributaries and reverse flow to Tonle Sap and rain fall on the Mekong mainstream and upstream. Viet Nam noted early warning is also crucial in disaster management, hence suggesting an efficient information sharing supported by the Secretariat. Viet Nam appreciated the sharing of information from Jinghong by China and Xayaburi in Lao PDR and looked forward to more of this kind sharing of the information on the operations of the dams in the future.

11. China expressed its pleasure in sharing the information for the droughts and flood management of the downstream countries. China articulated that based on the assessment the impacts of flow on tributaries of the Mekong on the Mekong mainstream are larger than that of the Lancang river in China. Therefore, China highly encouraged all the Member Countries and the Dialogue Partners to enhance the cooperation in any possible mechanism including but not limited to joint research or studies or exchange of visits and experiences to boost the cooperation and improve the understanding of a certain hydrological or climate-related phenomenon.

12. The CEO emphasized the reasons of recent droughts presented by the Secretariat and stressed by China, highlighting the key role and importance of the MRC Secretariat in offering the needed information and critical analysis of the information on water level and flow for all the Member Countries' further management and mitigation measures when it comes to the hydrological or climate-related disasters. Given this central and crucial role of the MRC Secretariat, the CEO urged that the

Secretariat be invited to participate in important events organized by LMC, so that the Secretariat would be able to perform its key functions for the MCs.

13. Cambodia stressed that it is vitally important for the Secretariat to conduct its timely dissemination of information sharing by China. Second, it is crucial to have the information sharing and flow analysis from the Secretariat for the preparation of the Member Countries. Third, on sharing of the information across border, the Member Countries would appreciate the information of rainfall or flow of the upstream for the downstream countries' management and mitigation measures.

14. The Meeting took note with great appreciation of the information presented by the Secretariat which has cleared up many doubts and different views, especially regarding the recent droughts event in the region.

F. Information on water resources development and management in the Lancang Basin (presented by China)

15. China presented the above information starting off with 1) information in Lancang River Basin, 2) China's water governance guidelines for the new era, and 3) Water Governance and Management system. Detailed information could be found in the power point presentation attached to this draft record as **(Annex 5)**.

G. Information on the water resources development and management in Myanmar, including Mekong basin (presented by Myanmar)

16. For this agenda item, Myanmar reported to the Meeting Water Resources Management in Myanmar including water resources, policy and law, institutions, challenges and opportunities, and a number of Mekong river sub-basins in Myanmar. Detailed information would be found in the power point presentation attached to this draft record as **(Annex 6)**.

H. Current and Future Cooperation between China and MRC (presented by China)

17. China presented to the Meeting two important cooperation areas - Cooperation between MWR and MRC since the 22nd Dialogue and Future Cooperation. For the first one, China has received a delegation from the MRC Secretariat CEO, renewed the agreement on data provision during the flood season to the MRC, provided notifications on the Operation of Jinghong Hydropower Station on Lancang River, jointly conducted with MRC and IWMI joint research project on hydrological impacts of the Lancang Hydropower Cascade on Downstream Extreme Events, promoted the synergies and harmonious development of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism and the MRC, and conducted several exchange visits. For the future cooperation, China informed the Meeting of the following two areas of cooperation.

- 1) The Ministerial Meeting of Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation in which they would invite the CEO of the MRCS as the observer at the LMC Ministerial Meeting and to work together with China on the MRC Council Visit to China, and
- 2) The Joint research and technical cooperation in various areas among Dialogue Partners and MRC Member Countries, including areas under the Five Year Action Plan of LMC Water Resources Cooperation.

More details of the cooperation areas are in the power point presentation attached to this Draft Record as **(Annex 7)**.

18. Viet Nam emphasized its wish to strengthen the cooperation on the data and information sharing and joint researches, technical exchange and capacity building. Acknowledging the positive development regarding the MOU between the MRCS and LMWRCC, once it is signed, Viet Nam requested the MRCS to prepare a detailed work plan for the cooperation between LMC and the MRC. For Myanmar, Viet Nam suggested the MRCS to further explore the possible areas of cooperation with Myanmar in the future.

19. China observed despite different focal points regarding cooperation with the MRC and LMC in some countries, we should create a synergy from different cooperation frameworks in order to minimize the use of resources and yet maximize the outcomes of the cooperation including through combined projects (for example, between LMC and MRC) or joint study or research.

20. Myanmar thanked China for its information, welcome and appreciated the opportunity to expand areas of cooperation with the MRC and Dialogue Partners as initiated by China.

21. All other Member Countries and the Meeting took note of the information presented by China, appreciated the opportunity for the MRC to expand its areas of cooperation with the Dialogue Partners as well as the proposed synergy initiated by China in this Meeting.

I. Progress on the Joint Research on Hydrological Impacts of the Lancang Hydropower Cascade on Downstream Flood and Droughts (presented by MRC)

22. Giving some background information including the preparatory work of the Joint Research, updates regarding process and progress of the research including recent activities and exchanges between MRCS, China and IWMI, the Secretariat shed lights on its findings and suggested next joint research/study topics. As a conclusion, the Secretariat presented its planned next steps including final report submission to MCs, its finalization, publication and Joint Technical Forum to be organized in early November (to be added for next researches after discussion during the Meeting).

23. China articulated the importance of the Joint Research on the extreme events, which has enabled all the concerned parties to better understand the impact of Chinese cascade dams on the down stream countries. China was of the view that the MRC can even play more pro-active and important role in holding media and public briefing on the extreme events such as in the event of recent droughts in order to demonstrate the MRC objective role and profile. The MRC could conduct the assessment and analysis in cooperation with China to disseminate to the media to exhibit the joint efforts and cooperation.

24. Lao PDR and Cambodia welcome more involvement and participation by China in the Joint Research and supported the good intention expressed by China.

25. Lao PDR requested that further joint research involving China and Myanmar with MRC should be conducted, looking back at areas / findings from the Council Study that are not yet clear and to further investigate the realities.

26. Thailand viewed that the close cooperation among the Member Countries and Dialogue Partners on data and information sharing is the key to make public and media for more understanding of the real situation and the consequences.

27. Viet Nam suggested the MRCS to finalize the report as soon as possible and to publish the report to a wider audience. Viet Nam suggested that in the next Joint Research, the scope of research should be expanded further down to the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam to address the issue of salinity intrusion due to the low flow in addition to the impacts of climate change. Viet Nam is ready to join the research in the future. Viet Nam welcome more involvement of other partners to provide more input and insights in the Joint Research.

28. The Meeting welcome the future cooperation with Dialogue Partners on the Joint Research and expressed their readiness to join the next Joint Research soon. The Secretariat and China will further discuss about the next joint research topics.

J. Proposals for cooperation between MRC and Dialogue Partners (presented by MRC)

29. As part of the cooperation with China, the Secretariat reported on data and information sharing and joint study. These include the continued provision of hydrological data during flood season, the Joint Research on Extreme Events, the invitation and participation in important meetings, the MRC Council's planned visit to China in December 2019 and areas of potential cooperation with both China and Myanmar such as Updating the Basin Development Strategy for 2021-2030, Follow up on the Joint Research on Flood and Drought, Co-facilitation of policy dialogue and technical exchanges, and Joint Symposium between MRC and Myanmar.

30. China appreciated the proposal made by the Secretariat for future cooperation and expressed its willingness to further discuss the proposal through technical channel.

31. Myanmar took note of the information presented by the Secretariat and expressed its willingness and cooperation to take part in the proposed cooperation activities.

K. Date and Venue of the 24th Dialogue Meeting

32. The Chairperson sought comments on the possible date for the next 24th Dialogue Meeting.

33. China noted it was flexible in terms of the date.

34. Lao PDR suggested the next Dialogue Meeting should be separated from the Council Meeting for their preparation.

35. The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat would coordinate further with all the Member Countries and Dialogue Partners to decide on the date for the next 24th Dialogue Meeting.

L. Review of the Draft Report of the 23rd Dialogue Meeting

M. Closing Statement by the Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2019

36. Considering the session's discussions substantive, rich and fruitful through the engagement in open and constructive dialogue, the Chairperson thanked all the participants and was fully convinced all the consultations and contributions on various matters in today's session would contribute to enhancing the current cooperation, bringing it to a whole new level. Before closing, the Chairperson reiterated his appreciation to the MRC Secretariat for organizing this event and NMCs for their facilitation provided to their delegates.

37. The Summary Record was adopted on 05 September 2019 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.