

RECORD OF THE TWENTY-FIRST DIALOGUE MEETING

GENERAL

1. The MRC's Twenty-First Dialogue Meeting (the Meeting) was held on 24 August 2017 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

2. The Meeting was chaired by **Dr. Inthavy Akkharath**, Secretary General, Lao National Mekong Committee Secretariat, Member of the MRC Joint Committee for Lao PDR, Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2017. The Chairperson was assisted by the Chief Executive Officer of the MRC Secretariat (the CEO). The Meeting was attended by 78 participants from all the MRC Member Countries, the People's Republic of China, the 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 2017

3. The Chairperson of the Joint Committee (JC) for 2017 welcomed the delegates from the MRC Member Countries (MCs) and Dialogue Partners, China and Myanmar, to the Twenty-First Dialogue Meeting and thanked them for their presence and participation. Drawing on the outcomes of the last successful Twentieth Dialogue Meeting in 2016, the Chairperson emphasized the strengthened cooperation and stronger ties with the Dialogue Partners, especially with China through a number of activities. Hoping to achieve some key development and outcomes, the Chairperson briefed the agenda items that will be discussed for the day. Before announcing the Meeting opened, the Chairperson expressed his appreciation to both China and Myanmar for the fruitful cooperation we have had over the past years.

B. Statement by the Head of Delegation for the People's Republic of China

4. Greeting all the Delegates and thanking the Secretariat for all the logistics arrangements and warm hospitality, the Chinese delegate, Mr. Li Hong, Permanent Minister Consular of China to UNESCAP provided reviews on the current Chinese cooperation with MRC, emphasizing that China attached great importance to the cooperation with the MRC and the region. China briefed on the establishment of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework and working group on water resources, emphasizing the cooperation in this framework with MRC is very promising. China also brought the Meeting's attention to the Road and Belt Initiative initiated by China aiming to help improve and develop needed infrastructure to boost development and industrialisation process of the region. China also shared with the Meeting its technical cooperation between China and MRC and Mekong countries, especially the sharing of information regarding water flow, water level and the sharing of hydrological information since 2003. Also addressed in the speech is the upcoming organisation of the 3rd Joint Technical Symposium with the MRC as part of the experience exchange and knowledge sharing. This will help enhance trust and cooperation with the MRC on water resources utilisation. Encouraging the MRC to play more important role for sub-regional water resources management and utilisation, China once again thanked the Secretariat for the organisation of the meeting and hospitality.

C. Statement by the Head of Delegation for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

5. Greeting the Meeting and all the Delegates, the representative of the Union of Myanmar shared his view of the importance of the Mekong river and their willingness and

readiness to cooperate in potential areas of cooperation that would be discussed and worked on at a later stage.

Adoption of the Agenda

6. With no suggestions or requests from the floor, the Meeting adopted the agenda (Annex 4: Adopted Agenda).

D. Achievements Since the 20th Dialogue Meeting (Presented by the Chief Executive Officer)

7. Welcoming all the Delegates to the Meeting, the CEO started his report on the achievements since the Twentieth Dialogue Meeting in July 2016 first with the data sharing with China based on the Agreement on the Provision of Hydrological Information of the Lancang/Mekong River in the Flood Season by Ministry of Water Resources of China to the MRC Secretariat signed on 6 August 2013. The CEO then reported on other progress since July 2016 including 1) the emergency water supplement and the assessment of the effects of the water supplement; 2) the upcoming joint research on Hydrological Impact of the Lancang Hydropower Cascade on Downstream Extreme Events jointly conducted by China, MRC and the International Water Management Institute; 3) technical visit by China's Ministry of Water Resources, Nanjing Hydraulic Research Institute and the Bureau of Hydrology for Yunnan Province; 4) the recent visit by the first and newly appointed Secretary-General of the Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center who is MRC long-time colleague, Dr. Zhong Yong; and 5) the 3rd Joint Symposium between MRC and China scheduled to be held in October this year. The CEO also briefed the Meeting on the revitalization and strengthening of cooperation with Myanmar, especially with a recent MRC participation in the Inception Workshop of the Myanmar Ayeyarwady State of Basin Assessment in June 2017 to share MRC's state of basin monitoring and reporting experiences. The MRC Delegates also had meeting with relevant Ministry chaired by the Vice President of Myanmar to discuss potential areas of cooperation, including state of basin report covering Myanmar part of the Mekong basin, Myanmar's membership in the MRC, and Joint Workshop later this year. Before proceeding to other agendas of the day, the CEO thanked all the Joint Committee Members, Dialogue Partners for their continued support and cooperation with the MRC Secretariat.

E.1 Information on Cooperation between MWR of China and MRC (Presented by China)

8. China reported on the cooperation covering six areas, beginning with the overview, information provision, exchange and visit, emergency water supplement, joint research and prospect. China would enhance the dialogue partnership and practical cooperation with MRC and MCs in the spirit of mutually beneficial cooperation and common development. Building on a vision of shared future, shared peace and prosperity, China also shared with the Meeting their cooperation in hydrological information provision in flood season to the MRC, notification of extreme events such as emergency information for the downstream countries and various technical meetings and visits to MRC Countries with the late technical meeting and visit to Cambodia and Thailand in May this year. In August 2017, the Chinese delegates also had a meeting with the CEO to exchange water resources cooperation. Also addressed in the presentation was the Joint Evaluation of the Emergency Water Supplement from China to Mekong River, a high quality report and positive assessment of the Joint Evaluation through MRC website and other news outlets, Joint Research on the hydrological impacts of the Lancang hydropower cascade on Downstream extreme events with the reaffirmed scope of the research and joint responsibilities worked out among key parties – MRC, China and IWMI as well as the recent visit to China on this Joint Research. On the areas of further cooperation, China would like to 1) enhance the emergency information notification, 2) Joint research project, 3) capacity building and technical exchange, 4) Exchange and visits and 5) Flood and droughts prevention and disaster mitigation. China welcomes MRC to take part in LMC water resources cooperation at technical level.

9. Thailand welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Dialogue Partners. Regarding the technical activities cooperation and the assessment of cascade reservoirs impacts on the

Lower Mekong Basin, Thailand noted it's one of the most important activities and the Member Countries should be looking forward to learning about this together.

10. Cambodia took note of the information provided by China and noted with appreciation of the well progressive cooperation with good faith and welcomed further cooperation with the Mekong countries for the sustainable development and management of Mekong River Basin.

11. Viet Nam appreciated the presentation by MRCS and Chinese Delegation. Viet Nam highly valued efforts to improve technical cooperation between MRC and China, particularly the setting up of communication mechanism for water release from the Jin Hong reservoir. Viet Nam encouraged MRC and China to work together to develop a cooperation framework between MRC and MLC, that would help improve cooperation among all six riparians for the sustainable mangement of Mekong River Basin. Viet Nam was also delighted to see progress in extending exchange and cooperation between MRC and Myanmar.

12. Lao PDR took note of the cooperation with Dialogue Partners and wished to have closed cooperation to ensure the sustainable development and management of the Lower Mekong Basin. Lao PDR encouraged improved cooperation on the timely hydrological data and information exchange as part of its efforts to save the community.

13. The Meeting took note of the information on the cooperation presented by China and agreed to enhance the cooperation with China, especially on the assessment of cascade reservoir impacts on the LMB, and other technical cooperation on data and information exchange and emergency notification.

E.2 Information on the Hydrological Conditions in the Mekong Basin (presented by MRC)

14. For this agenda item, the Secretariat reported on the general hydrological conditions in the Lower Mekong Basin for the period of June 2016-July 2017, covering three aspects: 1) Rainfall conditions over the basin; 2) River monitoring on the mainstream; and 3) Reverse flows to the Tonle Sap Lake. For the dry season of 2017, the driest month was February (6 mm), while the wettest month was July (397 mm). For the wet season of 2017, rain started as early as April-May 2017 with its rainfall amount of twice the average. A major flooding occurred in Sakon Nakhon of Thailand and in Choam Ksan of Cambodia due to a Tropical Storm Sonca hitting the central Viet Nam, southern Lao PDR and eastern Thailand from 25-26 July 2017. Monthly rainfall pattern from June 2016 to July 2017 over the LMB and analysis of surplus and deficit of monthly rainfall were reported. Hydrological regimes of June 2016-July 2017 of the Mekong mainstream at various stations were also reported. The reversed flows of 2016 started on 21 June 2016 and ended on 28 September 2016, bringing the total accumulated volumes to 26.96 km³ for the reversed flow duration of 100 days. The reversed flows to the Tonle Sap Lake of 2017 started earlier on 9 May 2017 and broke the historical records of 1997-2014 (15 May 1999). Refilling to the lake was characterised by fast rising flows in July 2017. The filling pattern was similar to that of 2011 and 2014.

15. The Meeting took note of the information presented by the Secretariat.

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

16. For this agenda item, the Secretariat went straight to the objective of the joint research. The Secretariat recalled a joint visit by the Member Countries, MRCS, IWMI and other relevant parties to Jinghong and Nuozhadu hydropower and corresponding river section in September 2016 to gain first-hand knowledge of the study area in the Lancang section. After the joint visit, the draft proposal was revised by the MRCS, IWMI and China, considering a wider and clearer scope of the research, identification of data and information needed and finetuning research methodology. For the next step, necessary data and information will be collected according to the respective role and responsibility listed in the revised proposal, followed by a joint field trip in the Mekong River to be organized and facilitated by the MRCS and the Member Countries. Then, a draft technical report will be

prepared and circulated to the Lancang-Mekong Countries for their inputs and suggestions. Finally, the technical report and its findings will be disseminated through appropriate channels and future Joint Regional Workshop with participation from all the relevant stakeholders.

17. Thailand shared with the Meeting its perspectives and lesson learned thus far regarding the cooperation with China. Regarding the joint research, Thailand suggested that there should be a sit-down forum for technical members to define the approach, methodology and activities on the NMCs side.

18. Viet Nam shared view by Thailand regarding the joint research and provided comments to the proposal. Viet Nam suggested the Secretariat further work with China to engaging more experts from MRC countries, and requested further clarification about the completion schedule of the research.

19. Cambodia took note of the hydrological conditions of the LMB and of the progress on the joint research and appreciated the recent joint visit conducted by China . Cambodia looked forward to the report on the joint research and participating in the joint regional workshop and any new proposals.

20. Lao PDR took note of the progress on the joint research and looked forward to the detailed proposal and concept note.

21. China thanked the Secretariat for the presentation provided. China was of the opinions that scientific study such as this joint project is critical to enhance trust in the cooperation between MRC and China. China thus hoped to continue this joint endeavour with respective responsibility and close cooperation by all the parties concerned.

22. The Secretariat provided clarification of the process of the joint research, especially the delay leading to a needed revision of the report. The revision will come up with the proposed timeline for its completion. On the methodology and scope front, there seemed to be no particular problem.

23. The Meeting took note of the information on the hydrological conditions and the joint research and asked the Secretariat to address the above requests from the Member Countries regarding the needed forum to refine the methodology and activities on the part of the National Mekong Committees as well as engaging more professionals in the research.

G. Proposed 3rd Joint Symposium: Capacity building and experience sharing on sediment control and management on river dams. (presented by MRC and ESCIR)

24. Providing some background and rationale of the proposed 3rd Symposium, the Secretariat reported on the objective of the cooperation between the MRC and China which is to contribute to the preservation of entire Mekong River system, the livelihood of millions of people and the important and friendly relationship between all Lancang-Mekong nations as well as to help hydropower dams owners minimize reservoir sedimentation and prolong the life of their dams. Specifically, it was expected MRC will learn a lot through the organization of the Symposium, for example, the knowledge and experience exchange from various institutions and companies such as Huaneng Lancang, Ecosystem Study Commission for International Rivers (ESCIR), the Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research of the Ministry of Water Resources of China, PowerChina Kunming Engineering Corporation, the Asian International Rivers Centre of Yunnan University as well as specific Chinese experience regarding “*Capacity building and experience on sediment control and management on river dams*”. Knowledge acquired in this 3rd Symposium will be used and applied to improve sediment control and management for river dams in the LMB. A detailed Concept Note with provisional programme and work plan will have to be jointly developed by the MRCS and ESCIR upon agreement reached in this 21st Dialogue Partners Meeting.

25. Thailand expressed interest in learning from the Chinese perspectives of cumulative impacts assessment on sediments and dam operations. The analysis of flow regime should be the standing topic for the technical symposium. Viet Nam was confused about the main theme of the 3rd Symposium. If the Symposium's theme is on sediment management, Viet Nam suggested MRCS' presentations focus on sediment data and monitoring; MRC sediment related studies; the implementation of Preliminary Design Guidance related to sand flushing; impact assessment, including impacts to sediment transport and its consequences to ecosystem, economic sectors, bank erosion and livelihood.

26. Cambodia took note of the information on the Joint Symposium. On the proposed topics, Cambodia viewed there should be more discussions between MRC and China regarding possibility of having most relevant topics to be covered.

27. Lao PDR shared the view expressed by Cambodia on having more discussions regarding the topics for the joint symposium.

28. China recognized the different views on the topics, but clarified that time constraint is a problem and urged the MRC countries to work more closely for the agreed agenda for the Symposium. China held the view that a more focused agenda is necessary. Bringing too many items in the Symposium would not help bring about a fruitful outcome.

29. The Meeting took note of the information presented by China and the Secretariat and the Member Countries will be engaging more closely with China regarding the 3rd Joint Symposium.

H.1 Information on LMC Water Resources Cooperation between China and Mekong Countries (presented by China)

30. For this agenda item, China provided its presentation beginning first with the background, followed by mechanism construction, high-level visits, project cooperation and technology exchange, personnel training and cooperation prospects. For the mechanism construction, on February 26, 2017, H.E. Mr. Zhou Xuewen, Vice Minister of MWR, met the representatives from Mekong countries to participate in the First Meeting of Joint Working Group on Water Resources Cooperation of Lancang-Mekong. On February 27, 2017, the First Meeting of Joint Working Group on Water Resources Cooperation of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation was held in Beijing. In order to prepare the LMC JWG related work, China invited representatives from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam to attend the preparatory meeting in Beijing in July 2016. The following are the major achievements of the meeting:

- **Concept Paper of Joint Working Group on Water Resources Cooperation**
- Reaching a consensus on **determining heads of each JWGs**, drafting **Five-Year Plan of Action**, accelerating the implementation of **Early Harvest Projects**, starting designing the second stage cooperation projects.
- Representatives highly appreciated the **Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation** and indicated will actively carry out relevant work.

According to the *Sanya declaration*, the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center(LMWRCC) was set up in June 2017. LMWRCC is a comprehensive cooperation platform for LM countries in strengthening technical exchanges, capacity building, drought and flood management, information exchange and joint research and so on. LMWRCC will serve and support JWGs and Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation. For the high-level visits, In September 2016, H.E. Mr. Chen Lei, Minister of MWR visited the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology of Cambodia, reached wider consensus on bilateral water resources cooperation. In September 2016, H.E. Mr. Chen Lei, Minister of MWR visited the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand, forcefully promoted bilateral cooperation in water conservancy. In March 2017, Mr. Wei Shanzhong (deputy-minister level), the Commissioner of Changjiang Water Resources Commission(CWRC) of MWR led a delegation to visit Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology of Cambodia and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation of Myanmar to promote water resources cooperation project. In March 2017, H.E. Mr. Wei Shanzhong (deputy-minister level), the Commissioner of Changjiang Water Resources Commission(CWRC) of MWR led a delegation to visit Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR to

promote water resources cooperation project. In December 2016, Mr. Yu Xingjun, Deputy Director General of the Department of International Cooperation, Science and Technology of MWR, visited the Department of Water Resources of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR and signed cooperative documents. For the project cooperation, bilateral water resources cooperation have been strengthened with Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. In order to promote bilateral water conservancy cooperation projects smooth development, both sides' technicians have carried out multiple technical exchanges and field visits (there are more than 10 groups since the last dialogue). In October 2016, Niu Xinqiang, Chinese Academician of Engineering, surveyed the water regimes and water eco-environment of the Tonle Sap Lake. On 10 August 2017, Mr. Zhong Yong, Secretary General of Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center, visited the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR and had a meeting with Minister H.E. Mr. Sommad PHOLSENA. On 9 August 2017, Mr. Zhong Yong visited MRCs and had a meeting with CEO, exchanged views on future technical cooperation. In December 2016, Mr. Zhou Gangyan, the Director General of the Bureau of International Cooperation, Science and Technology of CWRC, led a delegation to Lao PDR and communicated with relevant departments of water resources. In March 2017, MWR of China and Royal Irrigation Department of Thailand held the 2nd Water Resources Cooperation Joint Steering Committee Meeting to strengthen water cooperation. For further strengthening water resources technology exchanges and cooperation, MWR of China and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand are going to hold China-Thailand Water Resources Cooperation Joint Steering Committee Meeting in September 2017. As for the personnel training, MWR of China has held 8 training programs about water resources management, drought and flood management, agricultural irrigation planning and management technique and so on, as well as more than 160 person-time professional technicians and officials from Mekong countries participated in learning and field visiting. At present, China is actively preparing Lancang-Mekong water resources advanced talent program and planning to train 30 master degree graduates in water conservancy related majors, which will be held at Hohai university in Sept. 2017. The following are cooperation prospect: Cooperation Projects of LMC Special Fund, Training Projects. China will work with Mekong countries to construct and develop LMC, JWG on Water Resources Cooperation and LMWRCC will play significant role in strengthening water sector cooperation across the region, finally promote regional common development and build the Lancang-Mekong community of shared future and common destiny. China welcome MRC to participate in relevant water resources cooperation at technical level with its experience and technical predominance in Mekong River basin management.

31. Viet Nam believed that the cooperation between MLC and MRC would be beneficial for all Mekong countries. Viet Nam looked forward to continued cooperation between MRC and MLC toward shared vision of both mechanisms on the sustainable water resources management of the Mekong River.

32. Cambodia took note with appreciation of the good cooperation between China and the Mekong Countries and looked forward to positive outcomes of the cooperation under the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Framework.

33. Lao PDR took note of the cooperation hoping the cooperation will help promote the sustainable water resources management of the region.

34. Thailand took note of the cooperation activities and looked forward to working together with other Mekong Countries in this framework.

35. The Meeting took note of the progress on the various cooperation activities with China and looked forward to the positive outcomes of the cooperation, especially on the sustainable water resources management of the Mekong.

H.2 Information on the progress of MRC decentralization (presented by MRC)

36. Reporting to the Meeting on the background of the decentralization, the Secretariat emphasized that the decentralization will be boosted and prioritized under the new structure as part of the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 as well as its incorporation into National Indicative Plans (NIPs). Major challenges and proposed solutions for all the decentralised activities and financial handover schedules were discussed and (re) approved at the MRC Regional Meeting on Decentralisation in April 2017. An updated version of the discussed 2017 brief review paper on decentralisation will be shared with the MCs to address remaining challenges, update national implementation plans (with newly provided PINs for the NIPs), and to consider further points to improve the decentralised activities to meet national and regional needs. The follow-up paper of the 2017 brief review of decentralisation that will be shared with the MCs includes performance indicators on the financial and technical handover. With the help of these, the current status, issues of and proposed solutions for the Batch 1 and Batch 2 CRBMF activities will be presented. The Secretariat also presented next steps.

37. China thanked for the presentation by the Secretariat and expressed the introduction will help the Lancang Mekong water resources cooperation center to better cooperate with the MRC in the future.

38. The Meeting took note of the information provided by the Secretariat.

I.1 Enhancing cooperation with Dialogue Partners (presented by MRC)

39. With some background provided, the Secretariat reported on the MRC Cooperation Strategy and Plan with China and Myanmar 2017-2020 which has been presented to the Joint Committee (JC) early this year. Welcoming the initiative and efforts to strengthen and further the cooperation, the JC suggested the Secretariat table some concrete ideas for discussions at this Dialogue Meeting for consideration by China and Myanmar as part of the enhancement of the cooperation. Some potential cooperation activities raised by the Secretariat include 1) State of Basin Report covering China and Myanmar's parts of basin, 2) Cooperation with Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism, 3) Water Release Communication Plan with China: Mechanism for downstream warning of significant changes to daily dam operation, 4) Joint Symposium with Myanmar, and 5) Myanmar's membership in MRC.

I.2 Enhancing cooperation with MRC (presented by Dialogue Partners)

40. China, in response to the Secretariat's above presentation and proposals, took note of the MRC's efforts in the work on the State of Basin Report. China saw the report as a very comprehensive one, but would suggest the Secretariat to make the portion of the report on the upper part a rather general one. China would further consider whether or how to cooperate with MRC at its proposal on this issue. On the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation with the six countries, China took note of the MRCS's request to be an Observer of the Joint Working Group on Water Resources Cooperation as the decision will involve the six countries, not just China itself. China is willing to positively consider the proposal of MRC to sign an MOU between MRCS and Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center.

41. Viet Nam took note of the response by China and the consideration of having MOU between MRC and Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center. Viet Nam wished to have a clear notification mechanism for emergency information notification between China and all four Mekong Countries.

42. Cambodia took note of the response made by China. Cambodia suggested the sharing of the emergency information notification by the Secretariat and then share with all the Member Countries.

43. Lao PDR took note of the information provided by China and expressed its appreciation of the existing cooperation and shared the view expressed by Viet Nam regarding the clear mechanism on the emergency information notification by China on the downstream countries.

44. Thailand took note of the response on the specific points by the Dialogue Partner and believed the step-by-step approach of cooperation is the right way forward. On the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, Thailand stated that the Secretariat should follow the protocol as agreed by all parties and reiterated that this matter requires further consideration.

45. In response, the Secretariat reiterated the emergency information notification should be the way forward for the cooperation between the MRC and China and to officialize this notification with clear focal points.

46. The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat and the response by China and to work further on various aspects of cooperation.

J. Date and Venue of the Twenty-Second Dialogue Meeting

47. The Secretariat would consult with the Member Countries on the date and venue of the next Dialogue Meeting and informed the Dialogue Partners accordingly.

K. Review of the Draft Report of the Twenty-First Dialogue Meeting

48. The Meeting reviewed the Draft Record of the Twenty-First Dialogue Meeting.

L. Closing Statement by the Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2017

49. Before closing the Twenty-First Dialogue Meeting, the Chairperson thanked all the Delegates for their insightful comments and inputs into the discussions concerning how proposed cooperation would best be enhanced. The Chairperson was particularly satisfied with the outcomes of the Meeting, the prevalence of the Mekong Spirit of cooperation and trust during the discussions, thus conveying his sincere gratitude to the valuable comments and contributions and cooperation shown from all the Delegations. He was particularly impressed by the ever-higher level of cooperation among the MRC and its Dialogue Partners with agreement for the next steps of the cooperation. Before declaring the Meeting closed, the Chairperson wished all the Delegates health, success and a safe trip back home.

The Summary Record was adopted on 24 August 2017 in Vientiane, Lao PDR.