



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
VIENTIANE

**Background on Singapore's Partnership with
the Mekong River Commission**

Singapore has joined the Mekong River Commission (MRC) as a Partner Organisation. While Singapore is not a riparian state, it has an interest in developments in the region. From shifting weather patterns, changes in crop yields, to environmental challenges and transnational crime, developments in the Mekong River Basin can easily affect other parts of the region and the world.

In a speech at the MOU signing ceremony, Singapore Ambassador to the Lao PDR Ong Siew Gay underscored the global importance of the Mekong. The river is widely recognised as one of the most biologically diverse regions. More than 65 million people live in the Lower Mekong River basin, of which an estimated 80 per cent rely on the river for food and for their livelihood. The river supports agriculture and fisheries, provides access to hydropower and trade, and fosters economic development. Countries from outside the region also benefit from these economic activities, too. Some 30 percent of global rice exports come from this region. Sound and sustainable governance among riparian states is therefore critical for all stakeholders.

Singapore's collaboration with MRC members is not starting from a clean slate. As a fellow ASEAN Member State, it has trained more than 57,000 officials from Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam under the flagship Singapore Cooperation Programme, including at in-country training centres in Phnom Penh, Vientiane and Hanoi, which Singapore established under the Initiative for ASEAN Integration since 2001.

Singapore also has ongoing collaborations with various MRC member countries on the sustainability agenda. It is importing hydropower from Lao PDR through the Lao PDR-Thailand-Malaysia-Singapore Power Integration Project, which is a pathfinder to the ASEAN Power Grid. The region has significant renewable energy potential, which is crucial for realising its green transition. But this can materialise only if there is stronger regional energy connectivity. The

global disruption to energy supply chains triggered by the war in the Middle East has made regional energy cooperation even more crucial than before. Singapore also has carbon credit cooperation under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement with all four MRC members, having signed Implementation Agreements (IAs) with Thailand and Vietnam, and MOUs with Cambodia and Lao PDR. The recent opening of the project application process under the Thailand-Singapore IA marks a concrete step towards translating these agreements into tangible impact.

As a Partner Organisation, Singapore can work with the MRC on a few programmes, including in space technology and capacity-building in areas like climate monitoring and water resource management; knowledge exchange in developing drought-resistant crops; and in urban water resource governance and management.

Ambassador Ong said that, as a small country, Singapore recognises that its solutions will have to be adapted to local contexts in the Mekong, rather than replicated wholesale. Nonetheless, Singapore believes in sharing its development experiences to foster collaboration and spark new ideas.

In his remarks, Ambassador Ong concluded that while Singapore is not a riparian state, it has an interest in developments in the Mekong and hopes to be able to make a modest but meaningful contribution. As the world goes through disruptive change, and fragmentation and geopolitical contestation accelerates, regional countries and external partners will have no choice but to double down on greater international cooperation.

.

29 April 2026