Mekong River Cooperation
Working *together*: global & local challenges

Enhancing Joint Efforts and Partnerships towards Achievement of the SDGs in the Mekong River Basin
2-3 April 2018, Siem Reap, Cambodia

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Visiting Professor: Oxford & Exeter Universities, UK; Tsinghua University, Beijing China.
Global Development Challenge: a global response.
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- 17 Goals for the world’s future, to 2030, backed by 169 detailed Targets
- Negotiated at the UN, agreed by nearly all the world’s nations, on 25 Sept 2015
- All Goals apply to every nation and every sector; cities, businesses, schools, organizations, All challenged to act: UNIVERSALITY
- All Goals are inter-connected in a system – we cannot aim to achieve just one Goal... we must achieve them All: INTEGRATION
- Achieving All Goals involves making very big, fundamental changes in how we live on Earth: TRANSFORMATION

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17 Sustainable Development Goals
Goal 6: Ensure availability & sustainable management of water & sanitation for all

Means of Implementation

6.A International cooperation and capacity development

6.B Local participation

Goal 6

6.1 Drinking Water

6.2 Sanitation and Hygiene

6.3 Water quality

6.4 Water-use Efficiency

6.5 Water resource mgmt.

6.6 Eco-systems
The global challenge of transboundary waters

“...the water problems of our world need not be only a cause of tension; they can also be a catalyst for cooperation. If we work together, a secure & sustainable water future can be ours.”  Kofi Annan Feb 2002
2nd Abu Dhabi Dialogue on Water Cooperation in South East Asia
1-3 July 2007, Bangkok, Thailand

History, process and current status of cooperation in the Mekong River Basin

Olivier Cogels
Chief Executive Officer
Mekong River Commission Secretariat

Integrated Program
1995 → ?
‘IPOE’: Mekong River Commission → world class RBO

2010→2013 visits: key needs

- **Riparian ownership & control**
  - serving Mekong states
  - riparian Chief Executive
  - riparian career staff, in-house academy
  - shared financing
  - from donor ‘driven’ to ‘basket’ funds

- **Basin ‘planning’ → ‘development’**
  - ‘cooperative regional assessment’
  - ‘broker’ deals & support negotiations
  - support local > regional benefit sharing
  - sustainable development ‘help desk’

- **Change → ‘development narrative’**
  - anti-development?
  - to supporter of good development
  - from ‘parties in dispute’ to ‘partners’

- **‘Apex indicators’ for policy makers**
  - eg system ‘health’; risk; cooperation

- **China: → dialogue, lock-in low-flows**

2018 progress

- **+ Riparian ownership & control**
  - serving Mekong states
  - riparian Chief Executive
  - ALL riparian career staff
  - 20%→100% 2030 financing of core
  - most donor support in ‘basket’ funds

- **+ Basin ‘planning’ to ‘development’**
  - CS ‘cooperative regional assessment’
  - facilitation ..5 joint projects
  - within 5 projects (more being done)
  - sustainable development ‘help desk’

- **+Change to ‘development narrative’**
  - employing PNPCA
  - facilitating good development....
  - good evidence of progressive shift....

- **+‘Apex indicators’ for policy makers**
  - new State of Basin report in progress

- **+China: dialogue, 2016 low-flows ...**
### Greater cooperation: why and how?

increase & share benefits....look for 4 types of benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 1: Environmental</th>
<th>Improved ecosystem sustainability, conservation &amp; water quality</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increasing Benefits</strong></td>
<td><em>To the river</em></td>
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</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 2: Economic</th>
<th>Improved productivity – energy, food, WASH, flood &amp; drought management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increasing Benefits</strong></td>
<td><em>From the river</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Type 3: Political</th>
<th>Reduced risks; policy shift to cooperation &amp; development</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decreasing Costs</strong></td>
<td><em>Because of the river</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>Type 4: Indirect Economic</th>
<th>Broader cooperation &amp; integration</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Increasing Benefits</strong></td>
<td><em>Beyond the river</em></td>
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What is cooperation?

- Cooperation is not “all or nothing”
  - more cooperation is not necessarily better

- Different levels of cooperative effort
  - different benefits, in different places, at different times

- “Right” level of effort depends on potential benefits
  - driven by hydrology, economics, riparian relations

- ....and the costs of capturing those benefits

- A “continuum of cooperation”
Cooperation Continuum: context specific

- Indus: treaty, commission
- Mekong → Lancang?: info sharing, assessments, some collaboration

- Communication & notification
- Information sharing
- Regional assessments

- Rhine converging national agenda
- Adapt national plans to mitigate regional costs
- Adapt national plans to capture regional gains
- Identify, negotiate & implement national investments that capture cooperative gains

- Parana & Orange: joint planning & investment
- Joint institutions
- Joint project assessment & design
- Joint investment
- Joint ownership of assets

- Senegal: joint equity ownership

Dispute

Unilateral Action

Coordination

Collaboration

Joint Action

Integration
‘Game-Changer’?

Manage rivers together... share costs & benefits...?

- eg: build jointly-planned/-financed/-operated ‘best-site’ storage/hydropower: minimise impacts, maximise benefits?
- Is there the vision, courage & spirit?.. if not now, soon?

Parana River: Itaipu Binacional (Brazil-Paraguay) – on border

Orange River: Lesotho Highlands (Lesotho-South Africa) – within Lesotho

Senegal River: Manathali (Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, & now Guinea) – within Mali
Is there a mandate – & interest – on the Mekong?

• **Definition of Terms: BDP**: general planning tool & process that JC would use as blueprint to identify, categorise & prioritise projects & programmes to seek assistance for & to **implement plan at basin level**

• **Article 1**: to cooperate in all fields of sustainable development, utilisation, management & conservation of water and related resources of Mekong....... **to optimise multiple-use & mutual benefits of all riparians**...

• **Article 2**: to promote, support, cooperate & coordinate in development of full potential of sustainable benefits to all riparian States....... with emphasis & preference on **joint &/or basin-wide development** through formulation of **basin development plan**, that would be used to identify, categorise & prioritise the projects & programmes to seek assistance for and to **implement at basin level**

**clear mandate**: implement at basin level, cooperate, multiple use & mutual benefits, joint &/or basin-wide development
IPOE-facilitated Workshop
Vietnam, 28/03/14

• Country groups:
  – Interests
  – Risks & opportunities

• Inter-country groups:
  – 2040: the Mekong we want to avoid
  – 2040: the Mekong we want to see
  – 2018: some early joint opportunities (‘deals’), moving towards the Mekong we want to see
  – 2016: the MRC we need: to promote the ‘deals’ & achieve the Mekong we want to see

• The ‘Council Study’ 2018 now provides evidence base
## Interests, risks, opportunities... possible areas

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2040 avoid</th>
<th>2040 see</th>
<th>2018 ‘early’</th>
<th>2016 needs</th>
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<td>Social-economic-status</td>
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<td>Flooding</td>
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<td>Low flows</td>
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<td>Water quality</td>
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<td>Environment, biodiversity</td>
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<td>Reliable irrigated? food production &amp; trade</td>
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<td>Fisheries &amp; trade</td>
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<td>HEP peaking power &amp; interconnection</td>
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<td>Navigation</td>
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<td>Recreation/tourism</td>
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<td>Other (cities?)?</td>
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Repeat this regularly?
Mekong River Cooperation working together, sharing benefits...