

(Translation)

Work Together As One for Common Progress

Address by Chen Lei
Minister of Water Resources of the People's Republic of China
At the Second Mekong River Commission Summit

Ho Chi Minh City, 5 April 2014

Your Excellency Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung,
Your Excellencies Prime Minister Hun Sen, Prime Minister Thongsing
Thammavong, Vice Prime Minister Surapong Tovichakchaikul and
Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to come to the Ho Chi Minh City to attend the Second Mekong River Commission (MRC) Summit. I wish to thank our host, the Vietnamese government, for the thoughtful arrangement, and I am sure that the summit will further advance the friendship and cooperation between the countries along the Lancang/Mekong River and boost strong, inclusive and sustainable development in the Mekong valley.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Lancang/Mekong River is the "mother river" for the 60 million people living on its banks and has nourished the great civilization on the Indochina Peninsula. The long and meandering river, serving as a bond of friendship, has connected our six countries closely together. People living along the river, from the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau where the Lancang originates to the Cuu Long River Delta where the Mekong flows into the sea, have multiplied and prospered generation after generation. As they drink from the same river, they share the same destiny as members of one close family.

China has been a good partner and good neighbor of other countries along the Mekong. We ~~have made it our goal to achieve common development and prosperity with our neighbors.~~ ~~have made it our goal to achieve common development and prosperity with our neighbors.~~ Last October, China

convened its first neighborhood diplomacy conference, where the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness were put forward, defining how China will engage and cooperate with the neighboring countries. More recently, President Xi Jinping put forward the strategic initiatives of building an economic belt along the ancient Silk Road and a maritime silk road of the 21st century. This is a part of China's latest round of open-up strategy and an important opportunity for deeper cooperation between China and its neighbors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The MRC is an important mechanism for Mekong valley cooperation. Over the years, it has worked for the comprehensive development, utilization and conservation of the Mekong, promoted dialogue and cooperation between the member countries and MRC dialogue and development partners, and made good progress in this regard. The first MRC summit held four years ago called for economic prosperity, social justice and a sound environment along the Mekong River. Four years on, thanks to the joint efforts of all countries, the aspiration for a sustainable sub-region is gradually becoming a reality.

China values the status and role of the MRC, and has carried out diverse and productive cooperation in practical fields with the MRC and member countries. As a dialogue partner, China has held 18 rounds of dialogue with the MRC, which contributed to greater mutual understanding and trust. To help downstream countries with disaster prevention and reduction, China has provided flood-season hydrological data of the Lancang River to the MRC free of charge for 11 consecutive years since 2003, and will continue to do so in a humanitarian spirit. China has also engaged in a wide-range of collaborative activities with the MRC and its members, including experience-sharing, technical training and field visits, and through such intensive interactions, helped other countries enhance their capacity-building.

With regard to China's development and utilization of the Lancang River water resources, we ~~will~~^{take} an appropriate, orderly and sustainable approach that stresses harmony between man and water. The upper reaches of the Lancang River are located in the economically underdeveloped regions of China, where scientific and appropriate utilization and development of the water resources is a practical need for poverty eradication and economic and social development of the region. Development and utilization of the Lancang is also a major initiative to promote clean and renewable energy, tackle climate change and realize

sustainable development in China.

In the course of developing and using Lancang River water resources, we take into account both the interest of China and that of the lower-reach countries and pay equal attention to conservation and development. We attach great importance to ecological conservation and the impact of trans-boundary river development. We have carried out careful pre-project study and research, enforced joint regulation, established wildlife reserves and increased fishery propagation to minimize possible impact on downstream water demand and the ecological system along the river. The hydropower cascade development on the Lancang River does not compromise water consumption. In fact, it helps balance water resources between rainy and dry seasons and contributes to the flood- and drought- resistance, and irrigation and shipping capacity of the lower reaches. For example, during the dry season between November 2012 and May 2013, precipitation in the Lancang River area was 50% lower than previous average. Yet through scientific regulation, the cascade reservoirs discharged seven billion cubic meters of water to the lower reaches, increasing water flows by 65% than that under natural conditions. In the first three months of this year, the Lancang River witnessed a severe drought. However, the latest data analysis has shown that, due to the regulation of the cascade reservoirs on the Lancang River, the water discharge in the river channel has been increased by 215% on average, and 300% in March. In doing so, despite of the severe drought with 50% less of precipitation, the downstream countries have been free from drought.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Against the backdrop of the slow recovery of the world economy, the Asia-Pacific region has enjoyed vibrant economic growth and made important contribution to the global growth. Economy in the countries along the Mekong River has mainly registered fast growth. The sub-regional cooperation enjoys a sound basis, big potential and bright prospects. We are all faced with the arduous task of achieving development at home, and we all share the political will to achieve common development through cooperation. We enjoy sound bilateral ties as the solid foundation and broad areas of cooperation including connectivity. Moreover, we have well-developed cooperation platforms including the ASEAN plus China, Mekong River sub-regional economic cooperation mechanism and the MRC. Unity brings strength, and cooperation will make us even stronger. With the acceleration of regional economic integration, China's cooperation with the MRC member

countries will have a bright future. Guided by the principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness and in the spirit of mutually beneficial cooperation and common development, China will strengthen its practical cooperation with the MRC and its members. Here I wish to make the following proposals:

First, we should make our development strategies more connected and aligned. China is actively promoting ecological progress at home, transforming its development model, readjusting its economic structure and promoting sustainable development. China is also actively implementing the strategic initiatives of the “economic belt along the Silk Road” and the “maritime silk road of the 21st century”. These strategies are highly relevant to the regional sustainable development strategy being formulated by the MRC. The two sides share coherent line of thinking, similar concerns and priorities and many shared interests. China is willing to work with the MRC to make our strategies more aligned and plans better integrated so that the strategies of the two sides will form synergy.

Second, we should have more integrated planning with regard to practical cooperation. China is willing to continue to enhance communication and promote practical and productive cooperation with other countries in the areas of hydrological information sharing, improved regulation of cascade reservoir, dredging of navigation channel and joint security patrol, so as to address the concerns of the downstream countries. We should also expand our cooperation, enhance planning and upgrade the level and quality of cooperation in the sustainable development areas including climate change, energy and food security, disaster prevention and mitigation and environmental protection. In doing so, we will be able to facilitate a coordinated development of the economy, society and the environment of the sub-region, and contribute to the formulation of the post-2015 global development goals.

Third, we should enhance cooperation on hydropower development. Appropriate development and utilization of the water resources will help bring into full play the role of clean hydropower in the sub-regional development and better promote the economic and social development in all the countries. China enjoys rich experience in hydropower development and management, and flood forecast, prevention and management. On the basis of utilizing our advantages and taking into full account the specific needs of the downstream countries, we are willing to provide technical training to other countries, and conduct mutual visits between hydrological stations and water projects at the upper and lower reaches. We will also actively support Chinese enterprises in taking part

in sub-regional energy cooperation. We have a clear goal, which is to ensure that all countries will benefit from the hydropower development.

Fourth, we should jointly foster a sound atmosphere for cooperation. China has sound cooperation with the MRC and the downstream countries. The sub-regional cooperation is faced with golden opportunities. In our cooperation, we have much common interests. Yet sometimes we might face disagreements. As long as we act in the spirit of candor, understanding, trust and cooperation, there is no issue that we can not resolve. China will continue to bring out the positive role of its annual dialogue with the MRC, further improve the exchange model, increase people-to-people contact and enhance the dialogue partnership between the two sides.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

China and the countries along the Mekong River are close neighbors, sharing the same mountains and rivers. It is the common aspiration of all the people along the Mekong River to turn it into “a river of peace, cooperation and friendship”. That serves our long-term and common interests. The Mekong River is the bond between us. China is willing to work jointly with all other countries to strengthen strategic communication, mutual trust and practical cooperation, advance the regional economic integration process and commit to the building of a “community of development” and a “community of shared destiny”.

In conclusion, I wish the Summit a complete success.

Thank you.