

(As delivered)

**Statement
by
His Excellency Mr. Sihasak Phuangketkeow
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Thailand
At the Plenary Session
The 2nd Mekong River Commission Summit
5 April 2014, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam**

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Excellency Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam,

Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen of the Kingdom of Cambodia,

Excellency Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong of the Lao People's Democratic Republic,

Excellencies Ministers,

Distinguished Representatives of Development Partners and Observers,

Distinguished Delegates,

- At the outset, I wish to express our utmost appreciation to the Government of Vietnam for the very warm hospitality and the very excellent arrangement for our meeting. I also wish to thank the MRC CEO and his team for their hard work.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,

- Four years ago, Leaders from the four MRC countries met for the first time at the Summit level in Hua Hin, Thailand, to affirm, at the highest level, their common political will to promote sustainable development, utilization, conservation and management of the Mekong River and its related resources.

- Today, four years later and almost 20 years after the establishment of the MRC in 1995, we must seize the opportunity of this Second Summit not only to reaffirm but also to reinvigorate our political commitment. We should also be forward-looking in providing strategic vision and guidance for the future direction of the MRC.
- Taking this opportunity, I wish to welcome the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar and the Minister of Water Resources of China. The participation by Myanmar and China at the full ministerial level in this Summit goes a long way to underline the importance that both countries have attached to their partnership with the MRC countries.
- The Summit today is both timely and significant – not only for the Mekong Sub-region, but also for the wider region as a whole.
- Through our efforts under the MRC over the years and through closer integration and connectivity under ASEAN, the Mekong Sub-region is now becoming an emerging growth center of ASEAN and beyond.
- Indeed, as we look ahead, there are enormous potentials. And yet we also face many daunting challenges that are trans-boundary in nature, arising out of the growing demands of development as well as our increased vulnerability to the effects of climate change.
- In dealing with these common challenges, we need to forge a sense of unity and common purpose among all riparian states of the Mekong River.
- This should be the spirit that guides the MRC work into its third decade.
- Looking ahead, permit me to share with the meeting four points that, in Thailand's view, would be key challenges ahead for the MRC countries.
- **First, we need to redouble our joint effort to achieve sustainable development and green growth for the Mekong Sub-region.**
- This effort is more urgent than ever, as we seek to address the impacts of rapid development and the impacts of climate change in order to seek ways to achieve sustainable, green and inclusive growth.
- The vulnerability of Asia, including the Lower Mekong Basin, to the threat of climate change is also underlined in the recently released UN report a few days ago.

- The report highlights a crucial point that, although climate change adaptation plans at the national level have been formulated in all four Lower Mekong Basin countries, trans-boundary adaptation planning across our countries does not exist to date. We should and must do more to enhance our joint preparedness, mitigation and adaptation capacity.
- We need more investment in green technology and environmentally-friendly development, while making sure that the drive for more economic growth is not at the expense of the fragile environment.
- Our efforts should also be in line with the ongoing discussion in the UN about the Post-2015 Development Agenda, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **Second, we need to ensure a better balance between water, food and energy security**, as demands keep rising and pressures increase on the limited resources.
- We have to be mindful of the fact that certain major development projects, especially infrastructure projects, within our borders can have implications beyond our borders. Therefore, we need to work together through the spirit of consultation to address possible negative trans-boundary impacts, especially on the environment and the societies that depend on the Mekong River for their livelihoods.
- We should therefore expedite the completion of the study on sustainable management and development of the Mekong River Basin.
- The Council Study will further enhance the ability of the MRC member countries' decision making process so that we can proceed on a more solid footing.
- **Third, we need to do more to enhance coherence among various frameworks dealing with development of the Mekong Sub-region and to close the capacity gap among the MRC countries through multi-stakeholder partnership.**

- In this regard, we need to work even closer with our development partners and find ways to better synergize the MRC work with those being done under other frameworks, such as the Greater Mekong Sub-region or GMS, the Mekong-Japan, the Mekong-Republic of Korea, and the Lower Mekong Initiative, with a view to increasing the capacities of the MRC countries to implement our cooperation now and into the future.
 - We need to further strengthen coordination and sharing of best practices between the MRC and ASEAN as well as other international river commissions, while stepping up our engagements with the civil society and the private sector.
 - **Last but not least, we must move forward with the strengthening of the MRC itself, taking into account the changing Mekong landscape.**
 - As part of the reform, every effort should be made to make the MRC more efficient and cost-effective in the way it carries out its tasks.
 - And for this reform to be successful, all MRC countries need to work together in common purpose and concerted action.
 - Guided by the sense of ownership, I am sure that we would be able to realize our goal of the MRC being fully self-financed and to further increase the pool of personnel from the MRC countries in the Secretariat.
 - A strengthened MRC will allow for stronger engagement within the MRC and beyond.
 - The MRC must look ahead and set clear directions, identify new opportunities and address new challenges in working toward the next strategic plan that would not only enhance cooperation within the MRC but also enhance our engagement with development partners and all other stakeholders, especially the civil society.
 - Thank you very much.
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