

SPEECH OF PRIME MINISTER OF VIETNAM – NGUYEN XUAN PHUC
At the Plenary Session of the 3rd MRC Summit
Mekong River Commission
(Siem Reap, Cambodia, 5/4/2018)

His Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia,

His Excellency Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of Lao PDR,

His Excellency Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand,

Distinguished Heads of Delegations from China and Myanmar and Representatives from Development Partners,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to attend the 3rd Summit of Mekong River Commission (MRC) in this beautiful city of Siem Reap with profound historical and cultural values. On behalf of the Delegation of Viet Nam, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Cambodia for the warm hospitality and the excellent preparation for the Summit.

I do believe that under the chair of H.E. Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, and the active participation of Member Countries, Dialogue Partners and Development Partners, the 3rd MRC Summit will be a successful, enhancing more effective cooperation toward sustainable development of the Mekong Basin.

I strongly assent to the Summit theme “*Enhancing joint efforts and partnerships towards the achievement of the development goals of the Mekong River Basin*”. My appreciation also goes to valuable outcomes of scientific collaboration among international and national scientists in the past two days. This is an excellent opportunity for us to discuss major long-term directions as well as to identify suitable priority areas ahead and promote the cooperation within and outside the Commission for equitable, reasonable and sustainable utilization of water and related resources in the Mekong River Basin, as well as for the fulfillment of the 2030 *SDG goals* of each country and the whole region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the 2nd MRC Summit in Ho Chi Minh City in 2014, the Commission has recorded a range of important achievements, testifying the long-term value of the *1995 Mekong Agreement* and the role of the MRC as the *unique regional institution*

with the function of setting legal framework and technical guidance to promote the sustainable utilization, conservation and management of the Mekong water resources. I would like to highlight some major results:

First, we have been effectively implementing the Integrated Water Resources Management based *Basin Development Strategy* for 2016-2020 and also the *Strategic Plan 2016-2020*.

Second, we have successfully come to the agreement that Vientiane, Lao PDR, is the venue for the MRC headquarters and for the first time a citizen from riparian countries became the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the MRC Secretariat that lays the foundation for achieving our goal of full ownership by 2030.

Third, we have completed the “Study on sustainable Development and Management of the Mekong River including impacts by mainstream hydropower projects”, which serves as the scientific basis for riparian countries’ decisions-making process on all basin development activities.

Forth, our Commission has broaden cooperation with Dialogue Partners, Development Partners, international river basin organizations, international organizations within the region with numerous important activities which have raised the recognition of its role.

These positive results have a clear indication of the effectiveness of the 1995 Mekong Agreement in enhancing the regional linkages and coordination as well as strengthening ties with relevant partners, cooperative mechanisms in the region. I welcome and highly value the efforts of sharing information and experience within the framework of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Mechanism (MLC), with the Summit held in January 2018; and the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) with the Summit held in March 2018 and other cooperative mechanisms. These mechanisms will help strengthening the good neighbor relationship among these 6 Mekong riparian countries and promoting cooperation in effective water resources management and utilization, ensuring water security.

I also acknowledge the valuable assistance of MRC Development Partners, and hope to continue receiving financial and technical supports to help MRC in implementing prioritized cooperative areas in the coming time, and at the same time, moving towards its financial self-sufficiency by 2030.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Mekong River is the waterway route of great significance in promoting international trade, tourism, establishing the connectivity, sustaining the livelihood of 65 million people in the Lower Mekong Basin. The river is also the source of water, sediment, and bio-diversity, widely regarded as the second to Amazon River Basin. Mekong river is the invaluable asset of riparian countries, and provides vast resources for our efforts toward poverty reduction and economic development, commerce, narrow the inequality, and enhance regional connectivity...

At present, the Mekong River Basin is facing great challenges including (i) rapid population growth, (ii) unsustainable use of water, land and forest resources; (iii) climate change, extreme weather, unusual natural disasters. As a consequence, the **Mekong water source is being depleted** both in quantity and quality, sediment and nutrition, and ecosystem and the environment are seriously deteriorating.

These negative signs are more obvious and severe in the Lower Mekong Basin countries, especially in the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam. Frequent prolonged drought, saline intrusion, erosion of land, land slide in river banks... have threatened the livelihood of more than 20 million people. Therefore we need to take concrete and timely actions to ensure that Mekong Delta continues to be the major rice supply hub for the regional food security, as it has been long regarded as the rice bowl and fishing ground of the region for hundreds of years.

Interactions among international scientists and experts in the past two days point to the pressing demand for restructuring two major areas, namely the production of food and agricultural, and aquacultural commodities in an environmentally sustainable manner, and the appropriate adjustment in dealing with the challenges towards renewable energy such as green and solar which have become increasingly competitive as a result of advanced new technology and material revolution.

Based on that, I wish to request the MRC should focus on ensuring the equitable, reasonable, and sustainable use of water and other resources in the following priorities:

First, strengthen the full substantive and effective implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, as well as MRC procedures and rules, and enhance the Commission's coordination and oversight role in facilitating the implementation of the Member Countries' commitments.

Second, keep updating *the Basin Development Plan* in line with the water resource planning of member countries; and propose joint projects of sustainable management and utilization of Mekong water resources.

Third, strengthen the (i) the sharing of information and data mechanism in the Mekong River Basin, (ii) enhance the monitoring network of water and related resources in the basin, (iii) establish a common database and knowledge base for the Commission and, (iv) improve national forecast and warning system to assist countries in planning on water and other related resources, responding to natural disasters, protecting the environment and implementing socio-economic development plans.

Forth, improve coordination and cooperation with Dialogue and Development Partners in mobilizing resources, absorbing management expertise and modern technology, collaborating in regional initiatives, exchanging data and information, conducting technical cooperation and raising the effectiveness of cooperation for sustainable development and environment protection.

In this connection, importance should be attached to work with Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC), GMS, ASEAN, United Nations and international river commissions such as those of Mississippi and Danube rivers, as well as learning the experience in coordinating the implementation of international agreements on transboundary of water resources and international lakes.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Under the light of our Summit's spirit "*One Mekong, one common spirit*", we should together stand united for cooperation and take actions for Mekong river to be a perpetual flow of peace and lasting prosperous links for all countries and people in the region.

May our meeting be a success.

Thank you./.