

**Statement By H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith,
Prime Minister of the Lao PDR
at the 3rd Mekong River Commission Summit**

April 5, 2018, Siem Reap, Cambodia

- Your Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia,
- Your Excellency General Prayuth Chan-ocha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand,
- Your Excellency Nguyen Xuan Phuc, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam,
- Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to attend the 3rd Mekong River Commission (MRC) Summit in this beautiful world heritage Angkor Wat city in Siem Reap Province. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Prime Minister Hun Sen of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the warm welcome extended to the Lao delegation, and I commend the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the excellent arrangements made for this Mekong River Commission Summit.

The Lao PDR highly values and commends the Mekong River Commission for its achievements over the past years especially the progress in the implementation of MRC strategies and priority areas as stipulated in the adopted Ho Chi Minh City Declaration, the implementation of the Basin Development Strategy, and MRC Procedures, programmes and projects, which has contributed to the enhancement of mutual understanding and practical and concrete cooperation among the Member Countries.

Excellencies,

As you are all well aware, the Mekong River basin's rich ecosystems and biodiversity has been closely linked with the livelihoods of the people who have lived in this region for more than thousands of years, thereby creating rich diversity in cultures and fine traditions of multi-ethnic people in the Mekong River basin, as well as creating conducive environment for the benefit of the people

and contributing to the socio-economic development of the countries in the Mekong River basin.

The term Mekong has a deep meaning in Lao language, the word “Mae” means “Mother” who is the care taker of life, while the word “Kong” means belonging to all nations and all ethnicities living along the Mekong River basin. The Lao people have great love for and feel protective of the Mekong River and regard it as their own blood and life. The Mekong River has also long been the river of friendship and has facilitated people-to-people contact as well as economic and socio-cultural exchanges.

The Lao PDR has always attached great importance and special attention to the principles of sustainable development, and has actively implemented its obligations under the relevant international agreements with a high sense of responsibility, especially the 1995 Mekong Agreement and its related procedures and guidelines such as Procedure for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement, which is one of the MRC’s Procedures that creates an opportunity for consultation and joint monitoring for the purpose of transparency, to ensure mutual understanding among Member Countries and other relevant stakeholders. Moreover, efforts are made to ensure that development of water resources in the Mekong River Basin is carried out on the basis of comprehensive scientific studies to support our decision-making, and on the basis of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), in line with sustainable development and in conjunction with implementation of priority areas through amongst others, National Indicative Plans. Therefore, I am of the view that it is of utmost importance for us to enhance cooperation in the management, utilisation and development of the Mekong River basin under the framework of the Agreement on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, in line with the principles of mutual respect and understanding towards realising the vision of making the Mekong River basin “an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin”.

Throughout the past years, water utilisation and development in the Mekong River basin, based on each member country’s particularities and potentials and in the spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual accommodation, has been conducted in a constructive manner and on the basis of mutual understanding. This good tradition of cooperation will enable us to continue working together to sustainably utilise the Mekong River basin in the coming

years in order to make the Mekong River truly a river of peace, friendship and cooperation.

Apart from our practical cooperation within the various mechanisms among our four lower Mekong countries, we have also extended our cooperation with other initiatives such as the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation framework, as well as cooperation with dialogue partners, development partners and other international organisations toward the management and protection of our natural resources, which are the primary sources for our water resources, with continuous achievements.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to commend the Government of the Republic of China for their continued efforts to enhance cooperation with the MRC through sharing of information and hydrological data and cooperation to facilitate navigation in the Northern part of the Mekong River basin. I would also like to congratulate the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for sending its high ranking officials to attend this Meeting as well as sending its young professionals to participate in the MRC's Junior Riparian Professional Development project. Furthermore, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all development partners for their effective assistance and support provided to the Lao PDR and for the implementation of MRC's plans and programmes.

Distinguished Delegates,

Alongside our progress and achievements, there remain areas that we need enhance our cooperation such as our efforts to put in place mechanisms to support our implementation of the priority areas particularly through the division of tasks and responsibilities of the MRC among member countries towards decentralisation by 2020 and financial sustainability by 2030, as well as our efforts to address the issue of accuracy for flood and drought forecasting in the Mekong River basin and implementation of MRC's Procedures.

On a final note, I would like to reaffirm the Lao PDR's readiness to continue efforts to fulfil our obligations and commitment together with other MRC

Member Countries in the effective and sustainable management and development of the Mekong River basin. I am confident that the cooperation between the MRC and dialogue partners, development partners and other international organisations will be further enhanced towards more tangible benefits for the Member Countries and the region and the world at large.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere thanks and deep gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to our delegation during the period of this Summit.

Finally, may I wish the 3rd Mekong River Commission Summit great success.

Thank you.