

The joint statement of the communities along
Sesan, Srepok and Sekong River

To
Madam Bu Jianguo
Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Kingdom of Cambodia

No.156, Mao Tse Toung Blvd., Phnom Penh, Cambodia (P.O. Box 26)
(金边毛泽东大道156号)

Request to Withdraw China's Involvement in the Lower Sesan 2 Dam

We are the members of the communities represented by the Sesan, Srepok and Sekong Rivers Protection Network, totaling more than 75,000 people. We want to bring to your attention the current situation in our traditional lands. We are local and indigenous peoples who have lived on the banks of the Sesan and Srepok Rivers for generations. We depend on the Sesan River and the surrounding land for our food, livelihoods, agriculture, culture and identities.

We would like to let you know that, we the local and indigenous people living along these rivers, have been experiencing negative impacts on a daily basis from hydropower development upstream in Vietnam on the Sesan and Srepok Rivers. This has included flooding and changes to water flows, reduced water quality and reductions in the number of fish available to feed our families. These impacts have severely damaged our agricultural livelihoods and caused illness and disease in our communities. No stakeholders have taken responsibility for addressing the impacts we face or finding a solution to remedy the problem.

We anticipate that our villages will suffer many additional harmful effects from the Lower Sesan 2 hydropower dam proposed for the Sesan River in Stung Treng, which is being developed by Chinese and Cambodian companies. In particular, the Lower Sesan 2 dam will cause serious negative impacts on the food and protein sources we rely on to feed our children and families. The dam will further harm our livelihoods, traditional practices, agricultural land, and destroy large areas of forest and natural resources which we living downstream and upstream from the dam site depend on for our survival.

The people of Cambodia believe that China is a great country with a strong economy and is equipped with considerable modern technology and scientific knowledge. So please, we request that China use its expertise to explore and identify alternative means of producing electricity and that the Chinese company Hydrolancang International Energy Co. Ltd withdraw from its involvement in the Lower Sesan 2 hydropower dam project.

Serious social and environmental impacts

Over the past 16 years, we have experienced negative impacts on a daily basis from hydropower dams built upstream in Vietnam on the Sesan and Srepok Rivers. This has included reductions in the number of fish available to feed our families, reduced water quality and changes to water flows, altering the quality of our farmland and water sources. We anticipate that our villages will suffer many additional harmful effects from the Lower Sesan 2 dam. The dam will destroy the essential food and protein sources we rely on to feed our children and families, as the dam will lead to close to 10% reduction in fish across the Mekong River Basin. Many of us will be forced to relocate from our traditional lands, and we will lose connection with our communities and culture.

We are afraid that these negative impacts will further compound the difficulties we are already suffering as a result of dams upstream on the Sesan and Srepok River in Vietnam. Reduced fish catch and issues with water quality have already affected our communities. The loss of food and vital nutrients, and the destruction of good soil, agricultural land, eco-systems and biodiversity will not only harm us but many other communities like ours downstream and along the Mekong River in Cambodia, Tonle Sap Lake and Vietnam's Mekong Delta, and even upstream in Laos and Thailand, and we believe it may cause a food security crisis in the region.

Lack of information and consultation with communities

The project developers of the Lower Sesan 2 hydropower dam, who include China's Hydrolancang, have provided little to no information to our communities about these impacts or about plans for relocation and have not afforded us with an opportunity to voice our concerns and participate in decision-making on the project. We are concerned that the company is not fully complying with Cambodian law in failing to fully consult and share information with affected communities, and is not complying with the requirements of Chinese law on environmental impact assessment, which requires the provision of specific project documents to communities during consultations.

Request for assistance from communities

We believe that the impacts of this project could be disastrous, and that involvement in this project may seriously harm belief in China's leadership among Cambodian people and others in the region. We understand that the Chinese companies investing in this project have already received criticism for building dam projects without proper process and authorization in China and poorly implemented resettlement procedures for communities relocated along China's Lancang River.

As it stands, this project may undermine China's efforts to contribute to economic growth, ensure environmental protection and sustainable development through its investments. Experts have stated that there are alternative means of power generation that would have far less harmful environmental and social impacts. We believe that promotion of and investment in these alternatives would strengthen the leadership of China in the region and would benefit economic growth in both our countries.

Our Requests

- That Your Excellency the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Cambodia kindly intervene with the Hydrolancang Company to reconsider their investment on the Lower Sesan 2 hydropower dam.
- That Your Excellency intervenes with the Chinese companies planning to invest in other dams on the 3S Rivers, to ensure that these companies fully investigate impacts and reconsider their investment in other potentially harmful projects such as the Lower Sesan 3 (Sinohydro Resources) and Lower Srepok 3 hydropower dam (Huadian Hong Kong Co. Ltd).
- That Your Excellency meet with community representatives from the 3S Rivers, in order to discuss this issue in person, and we invite you to visit our communities to understand the impacts we are already suffering which will be compounded by further dams.

For the reasons set out above, we sincerely and respectfully hope that Your Excellency will take our requests into consideration and respond positively to us. We would be very happy to provide any further information at your request.

We respectfully implore Your Excellency to raise our concerns with the Chinese government and with the project developers, including Hydrolancang International Energy Co. Ltd and its parent company, Huaneng Group.

Your Excellency we extend our highest honor and gratitude to you and hope that you look upon our request for intervention with favour.

For further information or response, please kindly contact the community representatives listed below:

1. Mr. Torn Cheang, the representative of Lower Srepok 3 (855) 88 300 2670
2. Ms. Hory Sout, the representative of Lower Sesan 3 (855) 97 625 7452
3. Mr. Fort Kheun, the representative of Lower Sesan 2 (855) 97 779 7488
4. Mr. Song In Samorn, the representative of Lower Sesan 2 (855) 97 285 0547
5. Ms. Sek Morn, the representative of Sekong River (855) 97 886 2438

The communities have asked the 3S Rivers Protection Network to assist with the response to this statement, including coordinating contact and arranging meetings with community members.

To arrange a meeting with the community representatives from the 3S Rivers, please contact:
Mr. Phou Bunthann, 3S Rivers Protection Network at T: (855) 97 739 3392 and
E. bunthann@3spn.org.