

***Nineteenth Meeting of the MRC Council
Joint Meeting with the Seventeenth Donor Consultative Group
Mekong River Commission
17 January 2013
Luang Phrabang, Lao PDR***

STATEMENT

of

H.E. Dr. Nguyen Thai Lai

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Viet Nam
Vice Chairman of the Viet Nam National Mekong Committee
Alternate Member of the MRC Council for Viet Nam

Excellency Mr. Noulinh Sinbandhit

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR
Chairperson of the Lao National Mekong Committee
Member of the MRC Council for Lao PDR
Chairperson of the MRC Council for 2012/2013

**Excellencies Members of the MRC Council,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates and Donor Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, I would like to warmly welcome you all to the Nineteenth Meeting of the MRC Council and the Joint Meeting with the Seventeenth Donor Consultative Group in Luang Phrabang today. I thank our Lao host for the warm friendly welcome and the excellent arrangement made for our Meeting.

Looking back at the time since the Eighteen Meeting of the MRC Council, allow me on behalf of the Viet Nam Delegation attending the Nineteenth Meeting of the MRC Council and the Joint Meeting with the Seventeenth Donor Consultative Group to express our heartfelt gratitude and sincere thanks to His Excellency Mr. **Lim Kean Hor**, Minister of Water Resources and Meteorology of Cambodia, Chairperson of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee, Member of the MRC Council for Cambodia, Chairperson of the MRC Council for 2011/2012 for his excellent contribution in guiding the Mekong River Commission to accomplish unremarkable achievements during the last one year of his chairmanship.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express the sincerest congratulation to H.E. Mr. **Noulinh Sinbandhit**, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR, Chairperson of the Lao National Mekong Committee for having assumed the Chairmanship of the MRC Council for 2012/2013. It is my confidence that, under your chairmanship, the Mekong River Commission will score further fruitful results in the year to come and I would wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of our full support and highest level of cooperation in the implementation of important tasks of the Mekong River Commission.

In the past year, I am very pleased to see that the Mekong River Commission has made remarkable achievements in implementing the Hua Hin Declaration, including preparation of the national and regional action plans to implement the IWRM-based basin development strategy, roadmap of decentralization of the MRC core river basin management functions to the member countries, especially agreement on the concept note for the MRC joint study on sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including impacts by mainstream hydropower projects. In addition, the MRC Programmes and Initiatives also have achieved important results in assisting riparian countries in integrated water resources management, climate change adaptation and disaster management and prevention.

I am also very excited about the encouraging results gained from the meetings with two upstream countries (China and Myanmar) in the past year. I highly appreciate the efforts of the MRC Programmes and of the Secretariat in promoting the initiatives of cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Degradation and depletion of water resources are taking place at alarm level in many rivers over the world. While most previously international and regional forums focused on issues of economic cooperation, trade and development, they are now taking more and more interest in cooperation on security and sustainable development of water resources, such as ASEAN, ASEM, APEC and East Asia forums. This in turn creates opportunities for the Mekong River Commission to extend our cooperation and exchange of experiences on sustainable water resources management at the trans-boundary river basins with our partners in the region and over the world.

Our Mekong River are now facing major challenges, namely impact of climate change and sea level rise; floods and droughts occur more frequently and more severely; and water demand of the riparian countries for social and economic development is increasing. Especially, launching of the first mainstream hydropower project recently in the Lower Mekong Basin is causing concerns of the Governments of the riparian countries in the region and the international community about its adverse impacts on the downstream areas. While we are still trying to do the research to understand its impacts, each riparian country should show their responsibility by assuring that any future development and management of water resources proposed in the basin should be considered with due care and full precaution based on best scientific understanding of the potential impacts. In this forum of the Mekong River Commission, I call the riparian countries continue to join our hands to work closely to expedite the implementation of the Study on the sustainable management and development of the Mekong river including impacts of mainstream hydropower and toward sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin as committed in the Hua Hin Declaration. I call on all development partners to continue to support these endeavour.

Taking this opportunity, I am pleased to inform you that Viet Nam is conducting a study on the impacts of Mekong mainstream hydropower which will be commenced in few months. We also enjoy the support and participation from other member countries to the study. We would like to share with you the view that the Viet Nam –initiated study and the MRC one would be supplementary to each other. Any

cooperation with our study will be highly appreciated and all requests for further information are welcome.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very glad to hear the report on the financial status as well as the growing new commitment of the support from Development Partners for the Mekong River Commission in the past year. On this occasion, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the donors, development partners who have provided untired support to the Mekong River Commission in achieving the sustainable development of the basin, and I hope that Development Partners will continue to provide both financial and technical supports for the Commission, in particular for the implementation of the MRC joint study on sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including impacts by mainstream hydropower projects.

In concluding my statement, on behalf of the Viet Nam National Mekong Committee and the Viet Nam Delegation, I would like to express my profound thanks to the Government of Lao PDR and the Lao National Mekong Committee for the warm hospitality accorded to us during the time of attending the MRC Meetings in this beautiful Luang Phrabang city. My thanks also go to the MRC Secretariat for its effective support to success of the Meeting.

I wish you all good health, success and happiness in the New Year 2013.

Thank you for your attention.