



**H.E. Hun Sen,
The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

**H.E Thongsing Thammavong,
The Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic**

**H.E Nguyen Tan Dung,
The Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam**

**H.E. Yingluck Shinnawatra,
The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand**

3 April 2014

Re: Call for the Cancellation of Dams on the Lower Mekong Mainstream

Your Excellencies,

On the occasion of the 2nd Mekong River Commission (MRC) Summit, the Save the Mekong Coalition writes to express our concern over the current state of the Mekong River due to the impact of existing and planned hydropower projects and the failure of regional cooperation in decision-making around hydropower on the Mekong mainstream.

We believe that the current trajectory of dam building in the Mekong River Basin undermines the commitments and spirit of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, most critically the Principles of Cooperation, under which parties agree “to protect the environment, natural resources, aquatic life...and ecological balance of the Mekong River Basin.”¹

The 11 dams planned on the Lower Mekong mainstream, threaten to destroy the Mekong River's rich environmental and economic productivity. According to the MRC's 2010 State of the Basin report, the mainstream dams “represent the single largest threat to wetlands, fisheries and local livelihoods of the Lower Mekong.”²

These dams would fundamentally undermine the abundance, productivity and diversity of fish resources in the Mekong; blocking critical fish migration routes, leading to a substantial loss to fish resources. If all 11 dams are built, the result would be an estimated 550,000-880,000 tonnes - equivalent to 26-42% - loss of fish resources³. Fisheries experts have stated that there is currently no technology that exists to mitigate the impacts these dams would have to fisheries. Such losses would undermine food security and livelihoods throughout the basin.

¹ MRC (1995), *Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin*, 5 April 1995. p5, Article 3

² MRC (2010), *State of the Basin Report 2010*. p94.

³ MRC (2010), *Strategic Environmental Assessment of Hydropower on the Mekong Mainstream*. p17

The hydrological and ecological changes caused by dams on the Mekong mainstream will irreversibly alter the river's complex ecosystem, causing permanent loss of biodiversity and blocking the flow of nutrient-rich sediment to the delta.

Additionally the mainstream dams will have significant effects on riparian communities, disrupting their way of life, cultures, sense of community and food security, while impacting approximately 40 million people in the Lower Mekong Basin. The impacts would be directly felt by more than 106,000 people, who face relocation; and are likely to be forced into a life of greater poverty.

The Mekong River is not the same as it was four years ago when Your Excellencies met in Hua Hin, Thailand for the First Mekong River Commission Summit. The first Mekong mainstream dam - the Xayaburi Dam – has begun construction despite a contested process within and outside the MRC that failed to achieve agreement amongst Lower Mekong countries. Now a decision on the Don Sahong Dam appears imminent. Over the past 4 years, the MRC has failed to define its role and facilitate inclusive and accountable decision-making. The future of the Mekong River, as well as the MRC is now at a critical point.

The 1995 Mekong Agreement recognizes the “immense value” of the Mekong River Basin “to all riparian countries.” Therefore we urge leaders to take the necessary actions to protect and preserve the future of the Mekong River.

Given the significant impacts of the Lower Mekong mainstream dams, we call on leaders to cancel all dams on the Mekong mainstream, including immediately halting construction of the Xayaburi and Don Sahong dams, as well as destructive tributary projects such as the Lower Sesan 2 Dam. And to use the opportunity of the Second Mekong River Commission Summit to discuss legal mechanisms that will strengthen regional cooperation, including transboundary environmental assessment and public dialogue, and most importantly to listen of the voices of people living along the Mekong who are already suffering from the impacts of hydropower dams about options to better share the cost and benefits of developing the Mekong River's natural resources.

Your Excellencies please accept our highest regards.

Respectfully,

Members of Save the Mekong Coalition

3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN)

Ashramsangsok

BothENDS, The Netherlands

Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT)

Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS)

Center for Social Research and Development (CSR/D)

Center for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD)

Community Economy Development (CED)

Community Resource Centre (CRC)

Conservation and Development on Cambodia (CDCam)

Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA)

EarthRights International

EcoSun Cambodia

Environmental Cooperation and Tourism Organization (CETO)

E-san Human Rights and Peace Information Center

Finnish Asiatic Society
Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)
Green Earth Volunteers
Green Innovation and Development Center (GreenID)
International Rivers
Khmer Farmer's Association (KFA)
Law and Policy of Sustainable Development Research Center (LPSD)
Living River Siam
Mekong Conservation Group, Loei Province, Thailand
Mekong Energy and Ecology Network (MEE Net)
Mekong Social and Environmental Center for Children Development, Thailand
Mekong Watch
Mekong-Lanna Network for Conservation of Natural Resources and Culture
Mlub Prumvihearhor Center (MPC)
My Village Organization (MVi)
Naming River Basin People Assembly
Network of Community Council in Nong Khai Province, 53 sub-districts, Thailand
Network of Mekong Community Council, 7 Northeastern Provinces, Thailand
Northeast Rural Development Organization (NRD)
Northeastern Citizen Network for Homeland Protection, Thailand
Northeastern Network on Land, Water, Fishery, Forest, and Mining, Thailand
Northern River Basin People Assembly
Northern Thailand River Network
Orphy Institute
Palang Thai
People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature)
Ponlok Khmer
Rak Chiang Khan Group
Redd-Monitor
Salween Rivers Network
Save the Forest Group, Tambol Sa-eab
Stop Mae Chaem dam and Pha Wing Chu Committee
Sustainable Energy and Justice Working Group, Ubon Ratchathani Province
Takorn Yom Youth Group
Thai Climate Justice Working Group, Mae Hong Son
Thai Water Partnership
The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF)
Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA)
Vietnam Rivers Network
World Rainforest Movement

Copy to:

Mekong River Commission Member Countries, Secretariat and Development Partners

Save the Mekong Coalition

C/O 409 Soi Rohitsuk (Ratchadapisek Soi 14), Pracharajbampen Road,
Huay Kwang, Bangkok, 10320 THAILAND Tel: (66) 02 691 0718-20 Fax: (66) 02 691 0714
Email: info@savethemekong.org Website: www.savethemekong.org