

The Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces

The Network of Community Organization Council in Seven Northeastern Provinces

Statement to Leaders of Asia and Europe on the Occasion of the 9th ASEM Summit

An Emerging Cross-border Crisis in Mekong: Stop Xayaburi Dam

5 November 2012

On the occasion of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) to be held in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), we, the Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces and the Network of Community Organization Council in Seven Northeastern Provinces, Thailand, demand all the heads of states attending the meeting be aware that the Mekong River has reached a crisis point due to a plan to construct hydropower dams in its lower reach, which are rapidly advancing. We are bringing your attention in particular to the Xayaburi Dam Project in Lao PDR made possible by investments from private companies in Thailand and the Power Purchase Agreement, which was signed by the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). This dam is moving forward despite oppositions raised by the governments of Cambodia and Vietnam, and most importantly, the people of the Mekong region.

One of the 12 hydropower projects slated to be built in the lower reaches of the Mekong, the Xayaburi Dam will cause grave concerns among villagers living by the river given its enormous impacts on the Mekong ecological system, fish species, fishery, agriculture, transportation, livelihoods and the way of life of more than 60 million people in the basin.

Several Asian and European governments have been donors to the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in the past few years, but the mechanism has proved ineffective and unable to resolve the conflict that has reached. The 1995 Mekong Agreement means almost nothing in spite of its existence. Decisions so far have not been made based on evidence, knowledge, and consultation, but rather on immediate vested interests.

Though an effort of a Laos media campaign, the government has falsely claimed the dam to be sustainable, but this is an unproven claim, as comprehensive impact assessment has been conducted to gauge the damages, particularly the transboundary impacts on upstream and downstream communities in Thailand and throughout the riparian region.

We, Thai villagers who will suffer the impacts from this project, have no idea who is to be held liable for the looming damages.

Since energy is part of the agenda during this important meeting, we would like to inform you that the Mekong is the bloodline, the life, the spirit and the culture of at least over sixty million people. It is our food and our livelihood and is worth more than being regarded as a source of energy and wealth for a small group of people. And after all, the Mekong region needs more comprehensive, sustainable, environmentally friendly and participatory energy planning.

So far, no one has asked us how much the Mekong River means to us and our livelihoods. Then, how can anyone legitimately claim that there will be no impacts inflicted on the Mekong people?

Stop the Xayaburi Dam, start a comprehensive and participatory impact study.

Let the Mekong run free!