

WELCOME REMARKS
BY
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AT THE 17th MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
OF THE MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION

Ho Chi Minh City, 26 January 2011

*Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First of all, on behalf of the Government and people of Viet Nam, I would like to warmly welcome you all to Ho Chi Minh City today attending this 17th Meeting of the Council of the Mekong River Commission and the 15th Meeting of the Donor Consultative Group. As the fresh air of the traditional Lunar New Year TET festival is coming, I would wish all of you a new year full of good health and success.

This MRC Council Meeting takes place at the time of completing the year 2010 marked with a number of important international events and excellent contribution to Mekong cooperation. Year 2010 also saw Viet Nam assumed the rotating Chairmanship of ASEAN and took over the Chairmanship of the Council of the Mekong River Commission. I would also like to highlight the success of the First Summit of the Mekong River Commission held on 4-5 April 2010 in Hua Hin, Thailand. The main outcome of the event was a Joint Declaration in which the highest political commitment of the Leaders from member countries to sustaining the implementation of the Mekong Agreement 1995, agreeing the MRC Visions, and identifying priority areas of actions for the years ahead.

It is therefore our pleasure to inform you of great appreciation from the Government of Viet Nam on progress made by Member Countries and preliminary achievements of the implementation of the Hua Hin Declaration, such as finalization of the MRC's legal frameworks and of the Integrated Water Resources Management – based Basin Development Strategy, formulation of a roadmap for the MRC during the next 5 years (2011 – 2015), and strengthening of the cooperation and dialogues with Strategic Partners and of all related institutional and capacity building for the Commission.

I believe that we all appreciate positive signals from the MRC Dialogue Partners, particularly the increased commitment and enhanced cooperation from China, and the wish to join the MRC from Myanmar; as well as discussions amongst ASEAN Leaders at 2010 ASEAN Summits on issues relating to the promotion of sustainable development, environment protection, and efforts on climate change adaptation in the Mekong River Basin. We also noted with great concern Mekong – US, Mekong – Japan cooperation initiatives which started to be undertaken.

*Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen*

Those achievements were due to the close cooperation amongst the MRC member countries, supports from Strategic Partners and international community, and the efforts of the MRC Secretariat. Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, may I welcome the increasingly enhanced cooperation from our Dialogue Partners, China and Myanmar, and also express appreciation to international partners for continual and valuable support accorded to the Mekong River Commission.

*Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen*

While being delight with abovementioned achievements, we are all fully aware of the fact that the Mekong River Commission is still facing a number of challenges and difficulties that threaten natural resources, especially the water resources, and their associated consequences impacting livelihoods and lives of millions habitants in the Basin. We should therefore highlight the Hua Hin Summit's theme "*Meeting the needs, Keeping the balance: For the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin*", and regard it as the long term direction for the Mekong River Commission in the coming time. May I suggest the MRC Council to focus on measures for the sustainable water resources development, especially on the mainstream of the Mekong River; a Basin's Action Plan for climate change adaptation; promotion of protection of environment and livelihood of the millions of people in the downstream, expansion of cooperation with Development Partners and Dialogue Partners of the MRC, and building up of the MRC toward an organization of full-ownership and efficiency and intensive contributing to the socio economic development in the member countries and the regional cooperation.

*Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen*

At the first Council Meeting after the First MRC Summit, it is my firm belief that the Meeting will approve plans and measures for implementation of commitments made in the Hua Hin Declaration. On behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, I would, once again, reaffirm our determination, the strongest commitments and full cooperation of Viet Nam in successful implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement and Hua Hin Declaration toward the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin. With this, I would like to call on all Development Partners, donor countries and international communities to maintain their close cooperation and intensive assistance given to the MRC aiming at achieving all the set forth goals.

Thank you for your attention.