

OPENNING STATEMENT

by

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Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Viet Nam

Chairman of the Viet Nam National Mekong Committee

Member of the MRC Council for Viet Nam

Chairman of the MRC Council for 2010/2011

Excellency Mr Hoang Trung Hai

Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of Viet Nam

Excellency Mr. Lim Kean Hor,

Minister of Water Resources and Meteorology of Cambodia

Chairman of the Cambodia National Mekong Committee,

Excellency Mme Khempheng Pholsena,

Minister to the Prime Minister's Office

Chairperson of the Lao National Mekong Committee

Excellency Mr. Suwit Khunkitti,

Minister of Water Resources and Environment of Thailand

Chairman of the Thai National Mekong Committee

Excellency Dr. Nguyen Thai Lai

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Viet Nam

Vice Chairman of the Vietnam National Mekong Committee

**Representatives of the Union of Myanmar, ADB, UNDP, World Bank, IUCN, and WWF
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, on behalf of the Viet Nam National Mekong Committee, and as the Chairman of the MRC Council for 2010 – 2011, I would like to thank Your Excellency Mr. Deputy Prime Minister for your presence with us today, and welcome all of you, to this beautiful and dynamic Ho Chi Minh City and to this Joint Session of the MRC Council and Donor Consultative Group.

I would particularly like to warmly welcome Delegations and all our Development Partners. Your support is a testament to our shared concern as well as strong optimism for the future of the Lower Mekong Basin.

As you all are aware, the year 2010 was indeed significant for the MRC. In April 2010, we held the First MRC Summit in Hua Hin, Thailand at which our leaders declared their commitment to address emerging challenges facing the Mekong River and outlined a number of priority areas of action, such as increased cooperation with Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and other stakeholders, adopting and implementing an integrated basin-wide strategy, studying and preparing for climate change adaptation, identifying and advising countries on opportunities and challenges of rapid hydropower development. In particular, it charted out sustainable direction for the organisation in which the country ownership exhibited through existing governance arrangements is complemented by self-sustained financial contributions from within the Basin by 2030. Those priority areas of action have been implemented with significant progress, especially on the preparation of the IWRM-based Basin Development Strategy which was submitted for further discussion and approval at our meeting.

To our delightedness, cooperation with our Dialogue Partners continues to increase. It is a process that depends upon trust and confidence and we have seen this grows with more and more frequent joint activities and interactions. Shortly after the Summit, missions to China and Myanmar have been made to strengthen the cooperation, especially to explore possibility of Myanmar to join the MRC in the near future.

***Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

We are holding this meeting at a time when the MRC Procedure for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement is being applied for the first time for the case of a proposed mainstream dam. We are fully committed to this process as set out in the Mekong Agreement in order to arrive at an appropriate course of action. This is probably one of the most significant considerations before us as a regional organisation and we are aware of the broad levels of international interest.

Climate change will impact on millions of people's lives as we know it today, especially sea level rise and salinity intrusion into the Mekong Delta. It goes beyond impact on agriculture, aquaculture and capture fisheries to affect the very way that people live. Therefore, a main priority here is to focus on how to include the climate change variable in the planning processes of all relevant sectors, specifically how Member Countries can develop and implement adaptation policies, measures and actions. In this regard, the MRC Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative supports the Lower Mekong Basin governments through collaboration, exchange and generating knowledge on adaptation, planning and implementation.

Later today, we will hear about progress on the establishment of the permanent co-hosted location of the MRC Secretariat agreed at the last Council Meeting and now a reality with the operation of our two co-hosted permanent offices in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The decision allows the organisation not only to save our efforts, resources and time, better focus its interventions at regional level and supports national initiatives, but also strengthen our solidarity and development partner's confidence.

We also shall hear the results of yesterday's donor harmonisation meeting and consider how good relations with our financial supporters can be achieved to further all our interests in the most efficient manner and how to manage the transition to full financial sustainability.

Finally, I am glad to inform you very good news which you might have known that the MRC Council will hold a Signing Ceremony for the MRC Procedures for Water Quality at the end of this session today. This important legal document was made possible thanks to untiring efforts for years in the expectation of not only from all level of government, line agencies and local authorities but also of local communities and the MRC Development Partners. This is also a critical step in facilitating the regional efforts in order to ensure the best possible water quality and timely response to the related emergencies in the Mekong Basin.

***Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

In concluding, I would like to express my profound appreciation for your presence and full participation here today and wish the Meeting a great success, and bring us a fresh view in opening a new chapter for not only our cooperation but also the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin.

I wish therefore declare the Joint Meeting of the MRC Council and with the MRC Donor Consultative Group open.

Thank you for your kind attention.