

17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of MRC Council  
Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam  
26 January 2011

## **Statement**

By

**Mr. Suwit Khunkitti**

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment  
Chairman of the Thai National Mekong Committee  
Member of the MRC Council for Thailand

**Excellency Dr. Pham Khoi Nguyen,  
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment,  
Chairman of Viet Nam National Mekong Committee,  
Member of the MRC Council for Viet Nam,  
Chairman of the MRC Council for 2010-2011**

**Excellency Mr. Lim Kean Hor,  
Minister of Water Resources and Meteorology,  
Chairman of Cambodia National Mekong Committee,  
Member of the MRC Council for Cambodia**

**Excellency Mme. Khempheng Pholsena,  
Minister to the Prime Minister's Office,  
Head of the Water Resources and Environment Administration,  
Chairperson of Lao National Mekong Committee,  
Member of the MRC Council for Lao PDR**

**Excellency Dr. Nguyen Thai Lai,  
Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment,  
Vice Chairman of Viet Nam National Mekong Committee,  
Alternate Member of the MRC Council for Viet Nam**

**Distinguished Delegates from the MRC Member States,  
Representatives of the People Republic of China,  
Representatives of the Union of Myanmar, ADB, ASEAN, UNDP,  
UNESCAP, World Bank, IUCN, and WWF,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honor and privilege for me to participate in the Seventeenth Meeting of the Mekong River Commission Council held in this beautiful and ancient city of Ho Chi Minh. On behalf of the Thai National Mekong Committee, I would like to thank Your Excellencies and JC members for your cooperation which led to the great success during my term of MRC chairmanship for 2009-2010 to drive the 1<sup>st</sup> MRC Summit Meeting a great success and various initiative activities have been launched for a good environment in our region.

I would also like to express our sincere congratulations to Excellency Mr. Pham Khoi Nguyen, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam, on his assumption of chairmanship of the MRC Council for 2010-2011. I am confident that under your chairmanship and wise guidance, the Mekong River Commission will continue to prosper and achieve good success in the fruitful implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement to benefit the livelihoods and well-being of the people in the Mekong region. I would like to take this occasion to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of our continued support and full cooperation during your tenure of chairmanship.

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

As we may recall, in April 2010, the four Member States of the Mekong River Commission, the MRC Secretariat, the dialogue partners, China and Myanmar, as well as donors and development partners participated in the first MRC Summit in Hua Hin, Thailand which resulted in the joint Hua Hin Declaration. The four Member Countries commit to working together to achieve sustainable integrated water resources management, economic growth and alleviation of

poverty and improvement of livelihoods in the Mekong River Basin. Not only did the Summit raise MRC's issues to the level of our Heads of Government, it has also institutionalized this arrangement through a commitment for them to meet and review our progress and challenges every four years, the next time here in Viet Nam.

To achieve our commitment, we need to continue to strengthen the MRC to enable it to play an important role and unique role in the sustainable development of water and related resources in the Mekong Basin in collaboration with the national, regional and international partners in order to eradicate poverty in the region.

Today, we gather here, once again, to try to achieve sustainable development of the Mekong Basin for healthy life of the Mekong inhabitants.

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

As we are all aware of the invaluable biodiversity of the Mekong River which have nourished the people in the Mekong Basin and despite some certain developments, its environment and ecological systems still remain in good condition. However, we could not make sure of our future regional biodiversity abundance as have been in the past. Regarding this, we share the same fate with the people in other parts of the globe, having been affected more or less by the intolerable impacts of the global climate change such as drought, floods, landslides, biodiversity and health. This is a matter of fact for serious consideration, we were facing severe drought especially last year as well as heavy floods. Thus, the Thai delegation wishes to raise the issue that it would be better for the Mekong River Commission to urgently implement the action plan of the “Regional Knowledge Hub for

Trans-boundary Water Resources Management” which it was endorsed by the Joint Committee last year. This is to make full use of the long-compiled data and information and invaluable expertise in this field to seek the opportunity, to get involved in and cooperate more closely with other global initiatives in due management of this potentiality of the Mekong Basin to solve problems of the consequences of climate change to improve the quality of life and adaptation of the people in this region.

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

We all recognized that this year, the new cycle of MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015 will begin, as well as a new phase of all core Programmes and the Initiatives of Sustainable Hydropower. But one of the greatest challenges facing us, now, is finding a workable and sustainable balance between economic growth, conserving the environment and biodiversity while also maintaining our vital cultural and social heritage. To fulfill our commitment to the regional communities, a better MRC environmental governance system, the so-called Procedures on Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA) based on a well-informed and involved public should be pursued. This seeks to find a balance and integrated approach to development. Thus, while we accept the sovereignty of each nation to pursue its own development path, we also urge that the concept of friendship be followed, where we understand and respect the impacts of our development activities may have on our neighbors.

Concurrent with this, we should look to build partnerships among our neighbors at many levels. This should go beyond not only national

cooperation, but strengthening ties and finding solutions at inter-country level. Furthermore, we should build concrete activities at the inter-local level not only technical but also cultural activities around the Mekong River, local water transport, local cooperation in water management, etc.

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

Should the above proposals meet with your interest and be found worthwhile for discussion, I have the honor to invite further deliberations during our meeting.

As our Royal Thai Government has approved a budget of \$30 million to conduct a study on Integrated-Land and Water Resources Management (I-LWRM) in 10 out of 19 provinces in the Northeast of Thailand on Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), feasibility studies and design, the results of such studies will be implemented to help local villagers and farmers.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our development partners for their continued strong support to the Mekong River Commission, which is invaluable for the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin.

My thanks are sincerely extended once again to the Government of Viet Nam, especially H.E. Dr. Pham Khoi Nguyen, for the warm welcome and kind hospitality accorded to the Thai delegations as well as excellent arrangements for the Seventeenth MRC Council Meeting. My thanks are due to the MRC Secretariat for the logistical arrangements of this Meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention.