

## **Joint Development Partner Statement Informal Donor Meeting, 29 June 2012**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Development Partners congratulate the Mekong River Commission and the Royal Thai Government for the excellent hosting and facilitation of the Mekong2Rio Conference in Phuket, 1-3 May 2012. The contributions of all Member Countries to the proceedings were well received. The event once again demonstrated that the Mekong Region is a leader in transboundary water resources management and has a lot of knowledge to share with other basins around the globe.
2. Development Partners welcome the possible accession to the Mekong Agreement by the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and the roadmap for engagement with the People's Republic of China. We look forward to the further strengthening of these relationships, leading to improved management of the whole basin and enhanced regional cooperation as ultimate goals.
3. Development Partners would welcome the further involvement of civil society in MRC processes and programmes. This is especially important when it comes to information sharing as well as participation. We invite an update on the Communication Strategy and Stakeholder Policy.

### **Progress of the MRC study**

4. Development partners would welcome an update on the formulation of the study on the sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including the impacts of mainstream hydropower projects, that was agreed by the Ministerial Council in December 2011 in Siem Reap. Development Partners stand ready to assist the MRC to ensure this study is realised, and to ensure other studies and assessments are suitably coordinated. Development Partners note that there should be no need for the preparation of the MRC study, or any other assessments, to slow down the implementation of the work plans of the MRC programmes.
5. Development Partners restate that in order to meet the needs of decision-makers in the region, the study should provide an opportunity to consult with all relevant stakeholders to address identified knowledge gaps, and account for the full value of environmental, economic and social services currently provided by the Mekong River.

### **Status of the Prior Consultation process for Xayaburi Hydropower Project**

6. Development Partners would welcome clarification from the MRC Member Countries and the Secretariat as to the status of the Prior Consultation process for the Xayaburi Hydropower Project, and when the Working Group on the Procedures for Notification and Prior Consultation and Agreement will reconvene.
7. Development Partners would welcome an update from the Lao Government on the Xayaburi Hydropower Project preparatory works, and trust that decisions will be taken with full engagement of relevant stakeholders. Development Partners would welcome the opportunity to visit the site of the Project and learn more about the implementation of the mitigation options being proposed by the recent review conducted by Compagnie Nationale du Rhône.

### **Financial sustainability**

8. The Mekong Region deserves a well-resourced Mekong River Commission. At the Informal Donor Meeting in June 2011, Development Partners requested a financial plan with milestones for increasing financial ownership by Member Countries. This would include the commitment to finance the Operational Expenses Budget by 2014 and full financing of the MRC by 2030. Development partners would welcome an update on this matter, including the status of the financial plan, from the members of the Joint Committee. Development Partners note that indications from Member Countries to increase funding for the MRC would be a practical affirmation of the commitment to the sustainable management and development of the Mekong River for the countries' mutual benefit.

### **Building capacity**

9. Development Partners congratulate the MRC and member countries for the significant progress that has been made in developing a community of professionals within the Mekong River Commission, drawing on expertise from within the Mekong Region and beyond. We also note the advancements that have been made on building capacity within line agencies, the National Mekong Committees and their Secretariats through MRC Programmes and through separate efforts led by each government.
10. We note that challenges with respect to human resources remain with regard to the MRC Secretariat, particularly the large number of unfilled positions, the obstacles to retention of qualified staff and the short duration of contracts in positions that need long-term experience. These challenges have led to a slowing of progress in the implementation of core programmes. Development Partners urge the MRC to reform recruitment policies and practices in order to secure professionalism, continuity and institutional memory and to simultaneously improve the attractiveness of the MRC Secretariat for career development. We welcome an update on how these issues are being addressed and request information on any proposed changes to the Chief Technical Adviser positions within the Secretariat
11. Member Countries have commenced efforts to structure and resource NMC Secretariats and Line Agencies to manage functions that will progressively be transferred to them from the MRC Secretariat. Development Partners will be pleased to work closely with Member Governments to ensure that critical functions of the MRC continue during and after the core function decentralisation process, and request an update on progress in this respect.

### **Programme implementation**

12. Over the course of this year, implementation of some MRC programmes has been occasionally hampered by requests from NMC Secretariats regarding procurement approaches and the scheduling of consultations. In some cases, NMC Secretariat representatives have countered previous decisions of the Joint Committee or Programme Steering Committees. Development Partners urge the Joint Committee to ensure that NMC Secretariats collaborate closely with the MRC programmes to ensure timely progress can be made on work plans and timetables approved by Programme Steering Committees.
13. Development partners consider data information exchange and sharing between the Member Countries and the Secretariat to be of utmost importance. In this regard we encourage Member

Countries, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to share comprehensive data amongst themselves and with the MRC Secretariat in a timely way. An update on the proposed pathway to deal with this would be appreciated.

14. MRC Secretariat staff need to access sites of relevance to their work within Member Country borders. Development partners respectfully call on Member Countries to support visits by MRC Secretariat staff to project sites where such visits are required to discharge their responsibilities and implement programme work plans.

### **Conclusion**

15. To facilitate ongoing close collaboration between Development Partners, Member Countries and the MRC between meetings, Development Partners would welcome a follow-up report by the MRC Secretariat on the matters raised in this statement before the next Donor Consultative Group meeting.
16. Development Partners thank the MRC Secretariat for hosting this Informal Donor Meeting. Development Partners welcome the ongoing opportunity to engage with and support the Mekong River Commission on issues of great importance to the region.

This statement is endorsed by the following countries and organisations:

Australia	Asian Development Bank
Belgium	IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature)
Denmark	The United Nations
European Union	The World Bank
Finland	WWF Greater Mekong Programme
France	
Germany	
Luxembourg	
The Netherlands	
New Zealand	
Sweden	
Switzerland	
United States of America	