

Joint Development Partner Statement
Donor Consultative Group, 18th MRC Council Meeting, 9 December 2011

Dear Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Development Partners welcome the closer collaboration that is occurring between the MRC and Dialogue Partners, China and Myanmar. We look forward to the further strengthening of these relationships with the improved management of the whole basin and enhanced regional cooperation, including through further data sharing and the eventual accession of China and Myanmar to the 1995 Mekong Agreement.
2. We welcome the agreement by the MRC Council to conduct a comprehensive study on the sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including the impacts of mainstream hydropower projects. We strongly welcome that this study will be conducted within the framework of the MRC. This important initiative deserves the best international scientific, social and economic advice and holistic consultative processes that can be deployed. Development Partners will assist the MRC to ensure this is realised.
3. This study should draw on existing studies, including the analysis of the MRC-commissioned Strategic Environmental Assessment of Lower Mekong Mainstream Dams, and draw on the current work plans of MRC programmes, particularly the Initiative on Sustainable Hydropower.
4. The study should provide an opportunity to address identified knowledge gaps and provide an opportunity to account for the full value of environmental, economic and social services currently provided by the basin. This comprehensive, evidence-based and consultative study should inform the decision-making process as to whether proposed Lower Mekong mainstream dams, including the Xayaburi Hydropower Project, should proceed.
5. Development Partners would welcome guidance from the Council to the Joint Committee and the Secretariat on the next steps for the commencement and implementation of the study, including clear timeframes. Development Partners would welcome a restarting of the review of the implementation of the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement, to inform the structure of future deliberation processes.
6. At the Informal Donor Meeting in June of this year, 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. We look forward to hearing progress to this effect and would welcome any commitments or guidance on this matter from the Council.

7. Development Partners welcomed the decision by Member Countries at the 2010 MRC Summit to decentralize core functions. We seek an implementation plan, including timeframes, for this process. Decentralisation of functions to NMCs and line agencies provides an opportunity to institute a different approach for MRC funding, with Member Countries directly funding devolved functions.
8. Development partners would like to see a high-level mandate from the MRC Member Countries for the finalisation of a well functioning Performance Management System. This should be based on objectives, baselines and targets for the MRC, including devolved responsibilities.
9. Development Partners restate their request for further guidance and commitments from the Council on reforming MRC Secretariat human resources management, especially with regard to the short duration of contracts for technical staff. This human resources policy has led to capacity gaps in programs. Ensuring that competent staff can be attracted and retained is a key means for ensuring the organisation's efficient and effective work. Longer term contracts provide greater security and will attract more candidates. Improved grievance relief mechanisms for staff would be an additional support to future-oriented human resources management at the MRC.
10. Given the complex nature of the MRC's work, Development Partners note that further targeted collaboration with other organisations and initiatives could be beneficial, including joint or adjacent steering committee meetings on relevant thematic areas. One potential partner, the Greater Mekong Subregion Program, supports projects in transport, energy, agriculture, and environmental assessment which have impacts on the region's water resources. Development Partners would welcome further guidance from the MRC on the identification of key partnerships for the Secretariat to develop and strengthen.
11. Development Partners positively note the involvement of civil society in MRC processes. We would welcome further engagement with civil society and local communities. This is especially important when it comes to information sharing as well as participation. In line with this, we would like to stress the importance to meet the need for communication in national languages.
12. Recent extreme weather events in the Lower Mekong Basin have shown the importance of building resilience to extreme climatic conditions in the basin. Flood forecasting, monitoring and emergency response mechanisms need to be harmonised between the regional and the national levels, and build upon the establishment and strengthening of the Regional Flood Monitoring Centre. The MRC - particularly through the Climate Change Adaptation Initiative, the Flood Management and Mitigation Program, and the Information and Knowledge Management Program - has a key role to play in better preparing for and responding to such challenges. Development Partners would like to see concrete cooperation between these three programmes.

13. Development Partners note that the capacity of the MRC has been greatly strengthened over the past decade. We welcome the appointment and commencement of duty of Mr Hans Guttman as the Chief Executive Officer of the MRC Secretariat. We thank Mr Pich Dun and Mr Tran Duc Cuong for their leadership of the Secretariat over the past 9 months. We recognise staff at the MRC Secretariat and in the National Mekong Committees for their dedicated service.
14. Development Partners welcome the ongoing opportunity to engage with and support the Mekong River Commission on issues of great importance to development in the region.

This statement is endorsed by the following countries and organisations:

Australia	Japan	Asian Development Bank
Belgium	Luxembourg	IUCN
Denmark	The Netherlands	The United Nations
European Union	New Zealand	The World Bank
Finland	Sweden	WWF
France	Switzerland	
Germany	United States of America	