

THE SECOND MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION SUMMIT

Ho Chi Minh, April 2014

Remarks by H.E. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung

At the Plenary Session of

The Second Mekong River Commission Summit

Ho Chi Minh City, 5th April 2014

*Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen of the Kingdom of Cambodia,
Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos,
Heads of Delegations of the Kingdom of Thailand, the People's Republic of China, and the
Republic of the Union of Myanmar,*

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Viet Nam, I warmly welcome leaders and representatives of the Member Countries, Dialogue Partners, Development Partners and international organizations to the Second Mekong River Commission Summit.

Our Meeting is of great significance to the Member Countries and to the Mekong cooperation process, as we will jointly review the implementation of the 2010 Hua Hin Declaration, deliberate on opportunities and challenges, and chart out the way forward for the Mekong River Commission (MRC) for the period of 2016 - 2020. We are commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Agreement on Mekong Cooperation and the establishment of the Mekong River Commission next year, and this gives our forum today added meanings. Under the theme "Water, Energy and Food Security in the context of climate change for the Mekong River Basin", our Summit represents part of the international community's joint efforts to promote water, energy and food security, particularly as we are celebrating the 2014 World Water Day - *Water and Energy*.

I applaud the Secretariat for its excellent job in helping ensure the success of the International Conference under the theme: "Cooperation for Water, Energy and Food Security in trans-boundary Basins under changing climate." Over 300 participants with a number of proposals and initiatives floated out indicated the significant interest of the international community as well as the great potential for cooperation in sustainable use and development of trans-boundary rivers, including the Mekong River.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Never before has the Mekong River Basin been confronted with so many challenges. There has been a mounting pressure on water and related resources and on the ecosystems of the

Mekong River Basin as a result of increasing demand for natural resources for socio- economic activities, including energy and food.

The Mekong River has become one of the five largest rivers in the world with most serious flow reduction. The annual average flow of the Mekong River at Chieng Sen, the gateway to the Lower Mekong Basin, has been reduced by 10% within the past 30 years. In Vientiane, Laos, the Mekong River has dried out to the point the people can walk across the river in the dry season. Meanwhile, in Thailand, the once calm Chao Phraya River inflicted huge floods of a national disaster level for months in 2011. In the Mekong River Delta of Viet Nam, salinity intrusion happened for the first time in the areas of Tan Chau and Chau Doc of An Giang Province. Such impacts have become ever more severe and urgent in the face of adverse impacts of climate change hitting riparian countries. In a worst-case climate scenario, sea level will rise up to one meter in Viet Nam in the next 100 years, submerging 40% of the Mekong River Delta and directly affecting 10% of the Vietnamese population.

To address such challenges, national efforts are not enough. We need to strengthen regional cooperation, particularly among the riparian countries, both upper and lower, through multilateral and sub-regional mechanisms such as the MRC.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Nearly 20 years since its inception, the MRC has been growing on the basis of the 1995 Mekong Agreement with important achievements, including the establishment of fundamental principles and strategic vision to ensure equitable and reasonable use of water resources in the Mekong River Basin. We are encouraged by the positive outcomes in the implementation of the 2010 Hua Hin Declaration, the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan of the MRC and the Basin Development Strategy on the basis of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). Thanks to the Members' efforts, 78 out of the 130 activities under the regional Action Plan have been rolled out with over 30% completed.

Nevertheless, as strongly echoed at the Pre-Summit International Conference, we may and should redouble efforts to better capitalize on cooperation opportunities and rise above these acute challenges. With that, leaders of the MRC Member Countries have considered the adoption of the Ho Chi Minh City Declaration at this Summit to reaffirm the Hua Hin commitments and lay down the way forward for the MRC's development in the upcoming crucial period.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a responsible Member and most downstream Mekong River country, Viet Nam always wishes to work with the other riparian countries for the sustainable development of the region. To strengthen the role of the MRC in our common interests, I propose that we place greater emphasis on the followings:

First, continue to fully and effectively implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement as well as the procedures and guidelines of the MRC on the equitable and reasonable use of water resources, including the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation, and Agreement (PNPCA) to support sound decision-making on proposed water resources development projects in the Mekong River Basin.

Second, update the progress of and intensify the implementation of the IWRM-based Basin Development Strategy through national and regional action plans. In the development of the MRC's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, consider adopting a new approach of water, energy and food nexus with a long-term, inter-disciplinary and multi-sectoral vision.

Third, step up the MRC's research and forecast activities, with focus on and highest priority given to the completion of the MRC Council Study on the sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including the impacts of mainstream hydropower projects.

Fourth, further strengthen the MRC's monitoring and coordination of Member Countries' commitments to cooperation, management, utilization and protection of the Mekong River for the sustainable development of the region. It is also necessary to continue consolidating the regional and international legal frameworks to promote the equitable and reasonable utilization and sustainable development of water resources.

Fifth, further expand cooperation between the MRC and its Dialogue Partners as well as encouraging the participation of and consultation among countries within and outside the region for the sustainable development of the basin.

Viet Nam joins the other MRC Members in commending the two Dialogue Partners of China and Myanmar for the cooperation and sharing of related information and experience. We also praise the development partners for their interest, support and assistance, and look forward to their continued financial and technical assistance toward realizing the priority areas of actions of the MRC in the upcoming period.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a nation, Viet Nam's foundation and development process has always been associated with water rice civilization. The Mekong River is, therefore, essential to our socio-economic development, and regional food security is also at stake. The Mekong Delta of Viet Nam, an area of over 40,000 km², is home to nearly 20 million people. Every year, the delta contributes some 27% of the GDP, 90% the rice export and approximately 60% of the sea-food export of Viet Nam. Nevertheless, the region has found itself impacted by climate change and Mekong mainstream projects and millions of local inhabitants found their livelihood significantly affected.

In this context, the Vietnamese Government has been exerting enormous efforts to ensure stable and sustainable development of the Mekong Delta as well as to address the challenges of water security and climate change. We have adopted the National Target Program to Respond

to Climate Change, the National Strategy on water resources towards 2020 and specific action plans. In addition, the Vietnamese Government has proactively conducted the Study on the impacts of mainstream hydropower development on the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam. We welcome commitments from the Laos and Cambodian Governments to participating in this Study, and look forward to receiving support and assistance from development partners and donors to complete this project by the end of 2015 as scheduled.

The Vietnamese Government has cleared internal procedures for to join the 1997 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses. This is part of our efforts to strengthen regional and international legal frameworks on the management, utilization and development of water resources at international rivers in a sustainable, equitable and reasonable manner.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With all twists and turns of history, the Mekong River remains a bridge of friendship and cooperation spanning the riparian countries. Today, in addition to ensuring livelihoods of more than 60 million people in the basin, the Mekong River offers vast potentials for cultural exchanges, tourism and economic cooperation for the regional countries.

I am confident that through exchanges and dialogue “in the spirit of Mekong Cooperation,” we will effectively address the challenges related to water resources, energy and food security while securing the legitimate interests of the people in the Mekong River Basin in terms of economic development, social security and environmental protection. As such, the Mekong River will remain forever a shared valuable asset of the present and future generations.

With that, may I declare open the Second Summit Mekong River Commission.

May the Summit be a great success!

May you all be of good health and happiness!

Thank you.