

**Statement By H.E Mr. Thongsing THAMMAVONG,
Prime Minister of the Lao PDR
at the 2nd Mekong River Commission Summit,
April 5, 2014, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.**

- H.E. Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- H.E Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia
- MR. Sihasak Phuangketkeo, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
- Distinguished delegates,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed great pleasure and honor for me to attend the 2nd Mekong River Commission (MRC) Summit, which is being held here in this beautiful Ho Chi Minh City. At the outset, I would like to commend the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the excellent arrangements made for this Summit.

This summit is of special importance as it takes place at a time when the global environment is encountering numerous challenges as a result of climate change and environmental uncertainty. This summit also coincides in a festive atmosphere as the four MRC Member Countries are commemorating the 19th anniversary of the signing of the 1995 Agreement with continued strong support being extended by our partners, namely the P.R China, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar as well as development partners and international organisations.

At present, the MRC has gradually improved its role and mandate, thus enabling member countries to increase national ownership in carrying out the given tasks and activities, especially in the implementation of the agreed eight priority areas. In particular, the Decentralisation process will allow the member countries to fully take charge of their given tasks by 2020 and enable the MRC to be financially self-sustained by 2030. In order to achieve the set goals, I am of the view that we need to continue to streamline the MRC Secretariat's structure for a more effective organisation. The Summit provides a good opportunity for us to take stock of the progress made in the implementation of the Hua Hin Declaration and redefine priority areas for the next four years (2016-2020).

**Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,**

The rich ecological system and biodiversity coupled with cultural heritage, fine tradition and ethnic diversity in the lower Mekong river basin have created conducive environment and brought about various benefits to people living in this region, thus

contributing to socio-economic development of the countries in the lower Mekong river basin. The Mekong has long been the river of friendship facilitating people-to-people contact as well as economic, social and cultural exchanges. Therefore, the MRC has encouraged its four member countries enhance development cooperation, properly manage and maintain the Mekong river basin in a sustainable manner in the spirit of mutual respect of sovereignty and for mutual benefits.

Throughout the past years, taking into account each country's particularity, potentials, and in the spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual understanding, the member countries have vigorously fulfilled our obligations pertaining Mekong river basin development. In general, I have observed that development activities in the Mekong river basin over have been properly managed without any tension and confrontation. Indeed, these are lessons learned that we should continue to cherish in order to make the Mekong river a river of peace, friendship and cooperation.

**Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

The Lao PDR has always attached great importance and particular attention to the principles of sustainable development, while actively fulfilling its obligations under the related international conventions in a responsible manner, including the implementation of the Hua Hin Declaration and the Strategic Plan for 2011-2015, thus contributing to socio-economic development of the Lao PDR. Nevertheless, during the past years the Lao PDR has been severely affected by natural calamities such as storms, floods, soil erosion and droughts as a result of climate change, causing heavy loss and damage to people's lives, homes and properties as well as to basic infrastructure including roads, schools and hospitals.

In realising the importance and the need to address the said environmental concerns, the Lao PDR has actively contributed to reducing green house gas emissions and fighting against global warming through protecting forests and striving to increase forest cover to 70 percent of the country's land mass by 2020.

I am of the view that natural environment has been subject to changes over time in each of eras, whether by natural cause or man-made. Indeed, development process has more or less brought about adverse impact on environment. To address the impact of climate change and environmental challenges does not depend merely on whether we should suspend or minimize development activities. On the other hand, we must find the most appropriate ways and means to properly manage and optimise the benefits gained from development and minimize the impact on environment. In this connection, I am of the view that it is of utmost importance for us to enhance cooperation in the management, utilisation and development of the Mekong river basin, under the framework of the Agreement on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, with a view to realising the vision of making the Mekong river basin as "an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin".

*Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

Taking this opportunity, I would like to commend the government of the Republic of China for its continued cooperation with the MRC by sharing hydrological data and facilitating navigation in the upstream river basin. I would also like to congratulate the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for sending its young professionals to participate in the MRC's Junior Riparian Professional Development project.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all development partners for their effective assistance and support provided to the Lao PDR and for the implementation of the MRC's plans and programmes.

On a final note, I am convinced that cooperation between the MRC and dialogue partners, development partners and other international organisations will be further enhanced, and bring about tangible benefits to the Member Countries and countries in the region and the world.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere thanks and deep gratitude to the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to our delegation.

May I wish the 2nd Mekong River Commission Summit a fruitful success.

Thank you.