



Ho Chi Minh City 2014

MEDIA KIT

2nd MRC Summit and International Conference

2-5 April 2014

The Rex Hotel, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

About the Summit and International Conference

The Second Summit gathers Prime Ministers of MRC Member Countries, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam and delegations from China and Myanmar along with other regional leaders, water experts and diplomats to address the most pressing issues on the Mekong River and its resources and set strategic directions and policy for the MRC.

The national leaders aim to reaffirm the transboundary cooperation amongst the Member Countries, and also with China and Myanmar at the Second Summit. They will review the progress of how the MRC has put into action the priorities set by the [first Summit](#) held four years ago.

Ahead of the four-yearly Summit, the MRC holds the International Conference on cooperation for water, energy and food security in transboundary basins. More than 250 international and regional water experts, stakeholders and delegations from the MRC Member Countries, China, Myanmar and Development Partners will discuss issues pertaining to the Second Summit. The Outcome of the Conference will be included into discussion of the Summit.

The Summit will be held on 5th April 2014 following a number of preparatory meetings on 3-4 April and the International Conference on 2-3 April. The venue for all events is The Rex Hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

Water, energy and food security in the context of climate change

The Mekong region is not only undergoing increased demands for water, energy and food but it is also facing changing weather conditions which have affected agricultural produce amongst others.

Development in the Mekong River Basin is accelerating including tributary and mainstream hydropower and planned diversion for increased irrigation, navigation and aquaculture. At the same time, the Mekong water resources are invaluable for its fishery that is the largest inland fishery in the world, for river transportation, and for wetland and flood plains that provide livelihoods for millions of people, particularly the poor. This development trend is driven by the objectives of riparian countries to use water and related resources to support their socio-economic development and poverty reduction policies.

The region is now facing rapid population growth, urbanisation and industrial expansion, increasing demand for energy, food and water against a backdrop of climate change and depleting natural resources. For example, rapid development in the Mekong region, including

tributary and mainstream hydropower projects, planned water diversion for increased irrigation, navigation and aquaculture, has implications on food and water supplies. Sea level rises have brought about salt water intrusion that has affected food production. Meanwhile, unusually high rainfall in mid-December last year resulted in unprecedented fluctuations of water levels and flows and muddier water in Southern Lao PDR and northern Cambodia.

The themes of the second MRC Summit and the International Conference reflect the urgency to address the interconnection of these issues.

The Summit will confirm the political will of the national leaders to work together to overcome constraints and challenges in sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin.

Participants at the International Conference will discuss relevant international and regional issues with an emphasis on challenges under climate change.

About the Mekong River Commission

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is the inter-governmental organisation that works directly with the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam on their common specific interests of joint management of shared water resources and sustainable development of the Mekong River.

As a regional facilitating and advisory organisation governed by water and environment ministers of the four countries, the MRC aims to ensure that the Mekong water is developed in the most efficient manner that mutually benefits all Member Countries and minimises harmful effects on people and the environment in the Lower Mekong Basin.

Serving its member countries with technical know-how and basin-wide perspectives, the MRC plays a key role in regional decision-making and the execution of policies in a way that promotes sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Since its establishment in 1995 by the [Mekong Agreement](#), the MRC has adopted a number of rules and procedures to provide a systematic and uniform process for the implementation of the Agreement. It also acts as a regional knowledge hub on several key issues such as fisheries, navigation, flood and drought management, environment monitoring and hydropower development.

The MRC Secretariat is the technical and administrative arm of MRC based in offices in Phnom Penh (Cambodia) and Vientiane (Lao PDR). The National Mekong Committees are its focal points in the four countries and they coordinate work at the national level.

The MRC engages a wide range of stakeholders into its programme work and strategic planning. The two upstream riparian states of the Mekong River Basin, the People's Republic of China and the Union of Myanmar, are dialogue partners with the MRC.

The MRC is funded by contributions from the four Member Countries and Development Partners—country governments, development banks and international organisations with a goal to be fully financed by the Member Countries by 2030.

PROGRAMME

THE SECOND MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION SUMMIT

Preparatory meetings for the Summit

3 April 2014

17:00 – 19:00 **A Preparatory Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee for the Second MRC Summit** (closed meeting)

4 April 2014

8.30 – 17.00 Development Partners Harmonisation Session

08:30 – 17:00 **Preparatory Meeting of the MRC Council for the Second MRC Summit** (closed meeting)

The 2nd MRC Summit

5 April 2014

09:00 - 10:00 Registration for the Summit

09:30 – 10.15 **Heads of MRC Governments’ Retreat (closed meeting)**

10:15 - 10:30 Coffee Break

10:30 **The Second MRC Summit** (*Open to registered members of the media*)
Venue: Lotus Ball Room on the 1st floor

10:30 - 10:45 *Opening Ceremony*

10:45 - 11:00 Opening statement by **H.E. Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung**, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

11:00 - 11:10 Statement by **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

11:10 - 11:20 Statement by **H.E. Mr. Thongsing Thammavong**, Prime Minister of Lao PDR

11:20 - 11:30 Statement by **H.E. Mr. Surapong Tovichakchaikul**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

11:30 - 11:40 Statement by Delegation of People Republic of China

11:40 - 11:50 Statement by Delegation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

11:50 - 12:00 Statement by Development Partners

12:00 - 12:10 “Ho Chi Minh City” Declaration presented by **H.E. Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung**, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

12:10 - 12:20 Adoption of the “Ho Chi Minh City” Declaration

12:20 - 12:30 Celebration for the Future of the MRC

12:30 - 12:50 Photo Session

13:00 - 13:30 Press Conference by **H.E. Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung**, Prime Minister of THE Socialist Republic of Viet Nam at Sunflower Ball Room

13:30 Lunch

BACKGROUND ON MRC SUMMIT

In 2010 the Mekong River Commission held an MRC Summit for the first time in response to the accelerating water and related resources development in the Mekong Basin. It was the first meeting of the MRC's highest political level. The Summit was held on April 5th which marked the date when the four countries, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam signed the Mekong Agreement in 1995 and became Member Countries of the MRC. The Second Summit is held on the same date.

At the first MRC Summit, the Heads of Governments issued the Hua Hin Declaration acknowledging key achievements since 1995 and agreeing on a number of priority areas of action for the MRC.

Priority areas of action:

1. Adopting and implementing the Integrated Water Resources Management-based Basin Development Strategy.
2. Intensifying efforts to effectively manage the risks from flood, drought and sea level rise, including establishment of forecasting and warning systems across the whole basin.
3. Facilitating an international legal framework that encourages river navigation and trade.
4. Researching and addressing the threat to livelihoods posed by climate change and cooperating with other regional partners in addressing haze pollution.
5. Monitoring and taking measures to improve water quality in priority areas of the Basin.
6. Sustaining the existing and future uses of water and related resources, and aquatic biodiversity, wetlands and forests in the Basin.
7. Identifying and advising on the opportunities and challenges of hydropower and other infrastructure development in the Basin, especially risks as they pertain to the protection of food security and livelihoods.
8. Continuing to improve the implementation of the Procedures for Data and Information Exchange and Sharing, the Procedures for Water Use Monitoring, the Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement and the Procedures for Maintenance of Flows on the Mainstream and finalise the Procedures for Water Quality.
9. Exploring and identifying opportunities for expanding cooperation between the organisation's current Dialogue Partners and Development Partners, in particular to address common water resources and climate change challenges, as well as identifying new Development Partners and other stakeholders.

Since then, the MRC has implemented the Hua Hin Declaration to address the priorities with a number of achievements including:

- The adoption of the IWRM-based Basin Development Strategy by the MRC Council and the preparation of the Basin Action Plan which addresses the agreed strategic priorities to optimise development opportunities and minimise uncertainties and associated risks.
- The management of flood risks by providing flood forecast based on water levels monitored at 22 stations along the Mekong River mainstream (including 2 stations in China) during the flood season (from 1 June until 31 October) and, during critical weather conditions, provides updates of flash flood risk levels in the Mekong basin.
- The promotion of freedom of riverine navigation by facilitating the agreement on Waterway Transportation between Cambodia and Viet Nam which has allowed cross border trade between the two countries and permitted access to the river system by foreign vessels.

- The Adoption of the Procedures for Water Quality in 2011 by the MRC Council and the implementation of activities to monitor water quality and ecological health.
- Addressing impacts of climate change on livelihoods by collecting meteorological data and downscale future climate projections, defining future climate scenarios, understanding the impacts of climate change on hydrological regimes, floods and droughts, ecosystems and biodiversity, and food security of the region.
- The development of tools and initiatives to promote awareness on sustainable hydropower, including a Rapid Sustainability Assessment Tool (RSAT), preliminary design guidance, and benefit-sharing mechanism among policy-makers.
- The enhanced cooperation with China who has agreed to extend the period of hydrological data sharing to one more month and increase the frequency of the information exchange from once to twice a day. This information can help improve flood forecasting in the Lower Mekong countries.

At the second MRC Summit, the Heads of Governments of the four MRC Member Countries will follow up on progress of the implementation of the Hua Hin declaration and evaluate preparations to realise Member Country's commitment to a vision for the MRC to be financially sustained through the process of the Core River Basin Management Functions decentralisation.

The Heads of Governments will discuss topics pertaining to current development of the Mekong River Basin and set strategic direction and policy for MRC to overcome those challenges through regional cooperation.

Facts and Figures

- **The Mekong is the tenth-largest river in the world.** It is home to unique, rich and abundant natural resources including rare species such as *Pangasianodon gigas*, the Giant Mekong Catfish, and *Orcaella brevirostris*, the Irrawaddy Dolphin. There are over 20,000 plant types and over 850 species of fish in the Mekong River basin which drains a total land area of 795,000 km² from the eastern watershed of the Tibetan Plateau to the Mekong Delta.
- **The Lower Mekong Basin's economy is facing rapid growth.** 60 million people live in the LMB, which is experiencing fast population growth. The result is an increasing pressure on natural resources for irrigated agriculture, urbanisation, industrialisation, electricity and food production. Against a backdrop of rapid regional economic growth and governments' plans for the region's greater connectivity to boost trade and the economy, many people still live in impoverished conditions with limited access to clean water and sanitation, employment opportunities and often lack sufficient food or electricity. Extreme poverty is evident in many geographic areas. In parts where poverty is reduced, social gaps and inequality are still widespread.
- **Deep pools in the Mekong River can be up to 90.5 meters deep.** Pools or deep pools are natural depressions in the bed of a river. They occur at regular intervals along most rivers and exhibit many forms including shallow, long depressions in wide alluvial channels and deep, short depressions in bedrock-influenced rivers. Along the Mekong and many of its tributaries, pools provide an important dry season refuge for a number of important Mekong fish species and a spawning habitat for some species. The distribution of deep pools is thought to have had an important influence on the evolution of the three geographically distinct migration systems in the Mekong.
- **The Lower Mekong Basin inland fisheries is the world's largest single freshwater fishery, with an estimated yield of 3.9 million tonnes per year** and a total value of US\$3.9 billion. Up to 40 million people (two-thirds of the population of the LMB) are actively involved in fisheries. Fisheries provide between 50-80% of the animal protein for the basin's population. They account for nearly 12% of Cambodia's GDP and contributes more to the country's economy than rice production. In Lao PDR, the fisheries value is equivalent to 7% of the country's GDP. Although proportionally less significant to the national economy, the Mekong fishery sectors in Thailand and Viet Nam add well over US\$750 million to their GDP each year.
- Average **consumption of fish and other aquatic animals is 45.5 kg/caput/year, well above the world average of 17.0 kg/caput/year.**
- **The Mekong has become one of the most active regions in the world for hydropower development.** More than 3,235MW (megawatts) of hydropower capacity have been installed mainly on tributary systems of the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) in the last 20 years. The full hydropower potential of the Mekong is 30,000 MV with only 10% of that developed to date. In much of the Mekong Basin electricity consumption is less than 5% of the industrialised world.

Projects representing a further 3,209MW are under construction on these tributaries. Eleven potential hydropower projects located on the Lao PDR, Lao PDR-Thailand and Cambodia reaches of the mainstream are at various stages of study by private developers under agreements signed with Member Countries of the Mekong River Commission (MRC)

- **The Mekong River has provided a means of transport for thousands of years.** Within the Lower Mekong Basin, the Mekong River and its major tributaries are navigable during the high-water season (about eight months of the year), with the exception of a 14-km section just north of the border between Cambodia and the Lao PDR – the impassable Khone Falls.
- **Today, inland water trade along the Mekong continues to grow** with an estimated 450,000 tonnes of cargo transported annually between China and Thailand. In Viet Nam's Mekong Delta, almost 70% of goods, such as rice, construction materials and consumables, are transported by water. In Lao PDR, smaller vessels are primarily operated to transport agricultural products and construction materials to and from areas which are only accessible by river. Inland and sea-going vessels are operated from Phnom Penh Port in Cambodia, as well as in Viet Nam's Delta.
- **Rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall are bringing drought to some areas and flooding to others.** Globally, the last decade was the warmest on record. Studies forecast average annual rainfall to increase 200mm. Rises in sea level rise are increasing saltwater intrusion to fragile ecosystems and farmland in the Mekong Delta, a main food production area of the region. The world's oceans are rising by an average of 3mm per year, threatening to inundate about a third of the Mekong Delta this century and damaging agriculture productivity and potentially displacing millions of people.
- **The average annual cost of the repercussions of floods in the Lower Mekong Basin ranges from US\$60 to 70 million,** while on the positive side of the ledger, the average annual value of flood benefits is approximately US\$8-10 billion. The basin is vulnerable to several climate change impacts that include a predicted mean temperature rise of approximately 0.8 degrees Celsius by 2030, as well as a regional increase in annual precipitation of 200mm.
- **About 60% of the LMB comprises tropical lowlands where most people live,** and where extensive and diverse aquatic habitats support a wide range of species which are caught and cultured.
- **With a quarter of the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB) population living below the poverty line, agriculture is usually one of the first options for raising living standards,** improving livelihoods and mitigating poverty. It is one of the main sources of food and income for approximately 60% of the people in the region. Farmers in the Mekong Basin produce enough rice to feed 300 million people per year. Although domestic food demand will augment particularly in Cambodia and Lao PDR, it is expected that food from agriculture can meet the need in the medium term. However, ensuring food for all will become a challenge at local levels due to flooding or poor road networks and post harvest infrastructures. Thailand is likely to continue to be a major rice exporter, but Viet Nam is likely to require much of its current export surplus for domestic consumption.
- There are more than 12,500 irrigation sites in the Lower Mekong Basin. Less than 10% of the total agricultural area is irrigated during the dry season. **Diversifying crops is a potentially beneficial strategy for improved agriculture.** Because many high-value crops require less water than rice, growing other crops can improve the productivity of water. This can also help to cope with the increasing demand for food and to expand the farmers' sources of income. Paddy fields produce food, but they also provide other useful functions including flood mitigation, groundwater recharge, river flow stabilisation, capture and re-use of irrigation water, erosion control, and microclimate regulation. Diversification may also include the combination of agriculture and fisheries and further integration of livestock.

- Even though there were concerns raised in early 2014 by residents from some riverside communities in the border between Thailand and Lao PDR over unusual fluctuations in water levels along the Mekong River, including what they consider to be lower-than-normal levels, **the MRC's data shows that water levels on much of the Mekong River had been higher than the long-term average since November 2013 until early March 2014** with unusual fluctuations observed in last December and February.

For example, a sudden peak in water flows in mid-December 2013 saw the water levels rise above the earlier recorded highest level for this time of the year. This is believed to be caused by the unusually high rainfall in southern China and northern Laos. In early February 2014 the water level in Chiang Saen dropped rapidly by 1 metre but the dropped level was still far above the long term average. The water level then quickly returned to high levels. The rapid changes were likely influenced by human activities (as there was no associated rainfall).

MEDIA CENTRE AND PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

Media Center

The Media Centre is located in the Camellia Room on the 2nd Floor of The Rex Hotel and operates from 2-5 April. It is equipped with wireless internet connection and shared work spaces. Media interviews can be conducted here.

Access to the Media Centre is exclusively provided to registered journalists who are advised to wear the media pass issued by the International Conference and the Summit at all time.

Registered journalists can pick up their media pass here.

Press Opportunities

- **Group photo session** at 12.30 on April 5th at the Lotus Ball Room
- **The main Press Conference** at 13.00 on April 5th by Prime Minister of Viet Nam at the Sunflower Ball Room
- **A press release** of the MRC Secretariat on achievement of the 2nd Summit will be issued on April 5.
- **A press release** of the MRC Secretariat on outcome of the International Conference will be issued on April 3rd upon the closure of the event.
- **Interview requests** with delegates from the MRC Member Countries, China, Myanmar and Development Partners are advised to be provided in advance.
- **High-resolution photos** of the events will be available for use by journalists with proper credit to the MRC on the summit website in the media centre section.
- **Statements will be provided on-site at the media centre.**

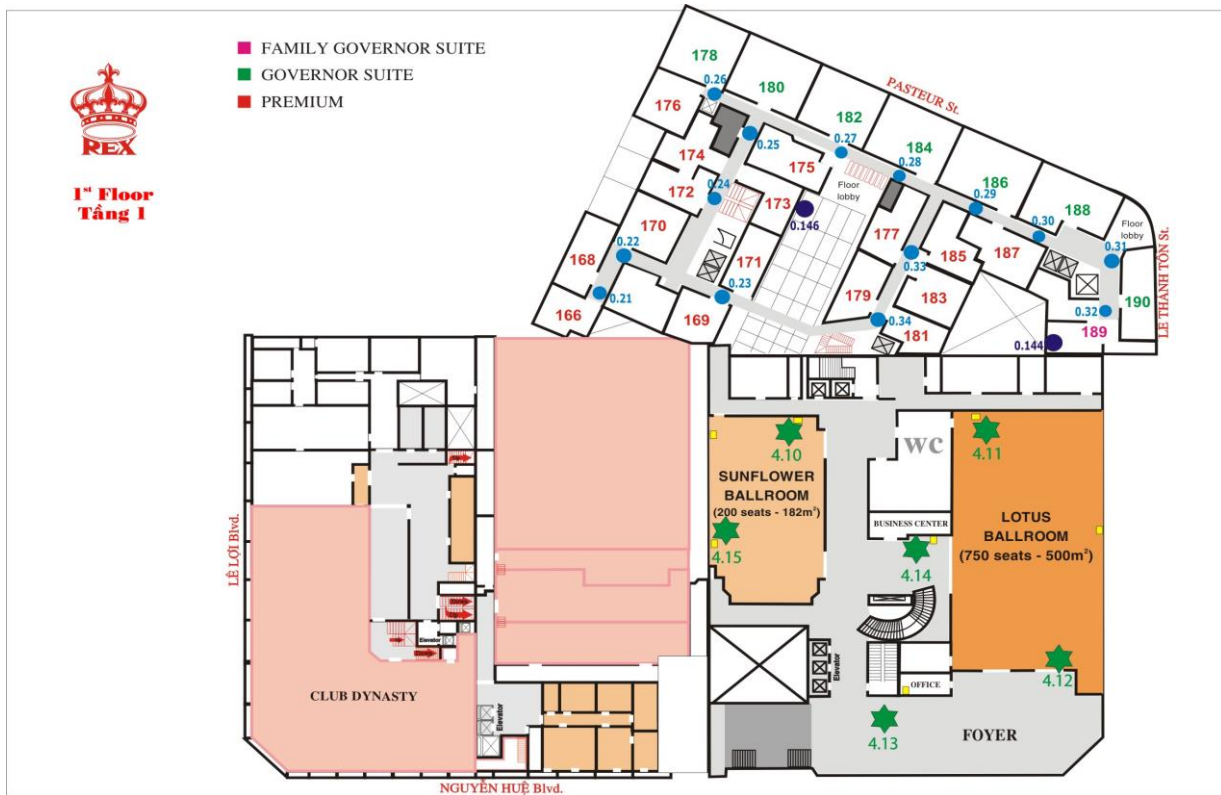
Media Access

Registered journalists can have access to all sessions of the International Conference and the plenary session of the MRC Summit. Please be advised that access is not allowed for preparatory meetings of the MRC, the Development Partners Harmonisation Session and the Retreat of the Summit.

For more information please go to: <http://www.mrcsummit.org/>

FLOOR PLAN AT REX HOTEL

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

