

## Fast Facts on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mekong River Commission Summit

*Stepping up collaboration for sustainable development under the banner of 'One Mekong, One Spirit'*

The upcoming [3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit](#) is convened by the Mekong River Commission (MRC), the premier institution working for regional cooperation in transboundary water and related resources development and management of the Mekong River Basin. It will bring together the Prime Ministers of the MRC Member Countries—Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam—as well as ministerial representatives from the MRC Dialogue Partners, China and Myanmar.

The MRC expects the summit to be a capstone event that will reaffirm the mandate and mission of the MRC and further enhance open dialogue and cooperation in the basin. The event is intended to boost ongoing joint efforts to address prevailing challenges and seize opportunities to achieve an economically prosperous, socially just, and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin.

### *When*

2-3 April 2018: Pre-Summit International Conference

4 April 2018: Ministerial Meeting for the 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit

5 April 2018: The 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit

### *Who*

The highest levels of government from MRC Member Countries and Dialogue Partners will attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit. The international conference will welcome MRC representatives and stakeholders from non-governmental organisations, academia, the private sector, and other river basin organisations in the region and around the world.

### *Where*

Sokha Siem Reap Resort & Convention Center in Siem Reap, Cambodia

## A brief history

The MRC has convened two previous summits: the first in 2010, hosted by Thailand in Hua Hin, and the second in 2014, hosted by Viet Nam in Ho Chi Minh City.

The [first summit](#) was held on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the signing of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, on 5 April 2010. This was the first time the leaders of governments of the four MRC Member Countries met under the MRC cooperation framework. Beyond reaffirming the political commitment to the implementation of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the event also launched the reforms of the MRC to strengthen regional ownership and achieve financial sustainability by 2030.

The 1<sup>st</sup> MRC Summit catapulted MRC's activities into an era of increased cooperation on water resources planning and management a timely change considering the acceleration of development

in the basin at the time. This move consequently brought about a focus on the inter-dependencies between the water-using sectors, and thus the focus for the 2<sup>nd</sup> MRC Summit became the so-called water–food–energy nexus.

The [second summit](#) aimed to strengthen capabilities across the basin to support sustainable development in the face of many future uncertainties, including climate change and related risks.

It was also the second summit that decided to expedite the implementation of the MRC [Council Study](#), a comprehensive study on the sustainable management and development of the Mekong River, including impacts of mainstream hydropower projects. Other priorities identified during the event included improving the implementation of the MRC Procedures and improving basin-wide disaster risk reduction efforts, addressing floods and droughts. The decentralisation process also continued.

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit builds on past achievements

The two previous summits have been key in propelling forward the MRC, helping it to mature as an organisation, championing its mandate, and establishing a strong commitment to its mission. Overall, the events helped put in place the building blocks for moving from national and sector-focused planning and implementation toward basin-wide optimal and sustainable basin planning and management.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit will build on these previous results, and it is expected to further strengthen and broaden the joint efforts and partnerships that are essential for the sustainable development of the basin.

### Highlights to look out for at the 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit

#### 1) Strengthened joint efforts and partnerships

A strong focus of the 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit is strengthening joint efforts and partnerships among the MRC Member Countries and all relevant partners. While the previous summits resulted in improved cooperation from an Integrated Water Resources Management ([IWRM](#)) perspective as well as nexus thinking beyond the water sector, this year's focus acknowledges that sustainable development hinges on successful joint efforts and open partnerships – a defining feature of MRC's identity. Expected results include reaffirming collaboration in joint projects, joint monitoring and joint actions and forging new partnerships for the betterment of regional–national linkages, of transboundary cooperation, and of cooperation with the MRC's Dialogue Partners, Development Partners, and other regional initiatives.

#### 2) Joint action on the Sustainable Development Goals

An important global development since the 2<sup>nd</sup> MRC Summit is the global commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The MRC recognises the important role that development and management of water and related resources play for the achievement of the SDGs in the Mekong River Basin, and it intends to contribute directly and indirectly towards achieving them. Although the MRC will mostly address Goal 6 on water, at least 10 of the 17 SDGs are very relevant to the MRC, given its strong commitment to the water–food–energy nexus and sustainable

development. MRC is uniquely positioned to provide decision support and a cooperation framework for the MRC Member Countries as they navigate trade-offs and synergies in pursuit of the SDGs.

### 3) Uptake of the Council Study

Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> MRC Summit, the MRC has investigated basin-wide opportunities and challenges through its studies and assessments, most important of which is the Study on the Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River Basin ([Council Study](#)). Stakeholders attending the international conference in advance of the summit will be invited to give their review and reflection on the study's main findings. These will help the MRC and its member countries to consider further uptake of the results in regional and national planning. This is expected to include implications for a new Sustainable Hydropower Strategy, to be published in 2019, and the new Basin Development Strategy, to be published in 2020.

### 4) Strengthened role and capacities for MRC

Achieving strengthened cooperation for sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin requires MRC to continue strengthening its role and capacities. With the renewed mandate and mission from the highest level of political leadership of the member countries, the MRC will be solidifying its role as both a knowledge hub and water diplomacy platform playing a more active role as a neutral facilitator to strike a balance between national and basin-wide interests, between the countries, and between development needs and environmental sustainability.

#### The way forward

The 3<sup>rd</sup> MRC Summit is expected to culminate with the issuing of the Siem Reap Declaration, which will specify MRC's priorities for the coming four years, until the 4<sup>th</sup> MRC Summit in 2022 to be held in Lao PDR. Key actions will also be spelled out in the Declaration.

#### About MRC

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) is the intergovernmental body responsible for cooperation on the sustainable management of the Mekong Basin. Its members are Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam. It serves as a regional platform for water diplomacy as well as a knowledge hub of water resources management for the sustainable development of the region. It is not a supra-national or regulatory body. The commission looks across all sectors to meet multiple objectives, including sustaining fisheries, fostering sustainable hydropower, identifying opportunities for agriculture, maintaining the freedom of navigation, improving flood management, and preserving important ecosystems. Superimposed on these are the future effects of more extreme floods, prolonged drought, and sea-level rise associated with climate change.

*Learn more: [www.mrcsummit.org](http://www.mrcsummit.org)*

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