

Statement of the Development Partners at the occasion  
of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit of the Mekong River Commission

Siem Reap, 5 April 2018

1. We, the Development Partners of the Mekong River Commission (MRC), are pleased to take the opportunity of this 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit to exchange views with the leaders of the MRC Member Countries and Dialogue Partners.
2. We consider that the Mekong River Basin is a **unique ecosystem**. The Mekong River spreads over 6 countries, is one of the most **biodiverse** in the world and has a rich cultural heritage. The Tonle Sap in Cambodia is the world's largest freshwater fishery. The Lower Mekong Basin is home to 65 million people who rely on the river's resources for their livelihoods.

Mekong Countries have seen strong development in the recent past with millions of households lifted out of poverty, but the Lower Mekong Region still contains substantial poverty and income inequality. Climate change and environmental degradation, such as pollution, deforestation and uncertain water supply, **affect most acutely people in poverty, in particular women**. It is they who depend most on the natural resources, which are being rapidly exploited.

Water resources offer opportunities for sustainable development in the Mekong Region. Given the impacts of planned and ongoing development projects in the Basin, **Integrated Water Resources Management**, with a focus on **poverty reduction** and **gender equality**, is of utmost importance to optimize water use between sectors and countries.

**Transboundary cooperation and coordination** among riparian countries and the open and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders are essential to minimize the negative impacts and optimize the benefits of water infrastructure and other economic development projects.

**In the spirit of this Summit to “enhance joint efforts and partnership”, we reiterate our very strong support to the MRC in its mandate of engaging relevant stakeholders for the sustainable development of the Lower Mekong Basin, the reduction of poverty and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

3. **We congratulate the MRC for the significant achievements made since the last Summit**, including the MRC reform, the recent release of the findings of the Council Study, the increased cooperation with regional stakeholders and the successful implementation of the Procedure on 'Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement' for the Pak Beng project.

**We believe the MRC has significantly evolved and has yielded many successes.**

4. On behalf of the Development Partners, I would like to share with you our **views for the future** of the MRC.
  - a. We call on the MRC to keep **poverty reduction** and **gender equality** as central considerations in all plans and activities.
  - b. We welcome the release of the MRC **Council Study** and take note of its findings. The Study provides a sound and neutral basis for understanding the likely trade-offs and distribution of benefits and losses across the Lower Mekong Basin. Given the severity

of the projected impacts of planned and ongoing investments on fisheries, food security, health and livelihoods, as well as the region's commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, we look forward to seeing how the Member Countries translate the findings of their Council Study into policies, agreements and actions. We encourage the Member Countries to revisit their development models to ensure that these capitalize on new knowledge and alternative technologies to ensure that public and private investments are economically and ecologically sound.

- c. Building on the results of the Council Study, we encourage the MRC Member Countries to integrate into future plans and strategies **non-hydro renewable** energy sources and increased **energy efficiency**. This will enable Member Countries to achieve energy security at lower economic, social and environmental costs.
  - d. We encourage the MRC and Member Countries to further strengthen **data collection and data sharing** which are prerequisites for the sustainable management of the river basin. Sound data is also the foundation for demonstrating progress against the Sustainable Development Goals, and will therefore support reporting in each of the Member Countries.
  - e. We support the increasing role of the MRC as a technical knowledge hub and knowledge disseminator to further improve information sharing and **meaningful public participation** including regular engagement with civil society organizations.
  - f. We continue to support the MRC **decentralization** of core river basin management functions and encourage Member Countries to allocate sufficient resources to the responsible line agencies, including National Mekong Committees, to ensure robust, transparent and effective governance of the Mekong River Basin.
  - g. We encourage the MRC to pursue active engagement **with China and Myanmar**, and cooperation with other **regional mechanisms**, in support of the MRC's mandate and improved regional coordination.
5. Once again, we **thank the MRC** for this opportunity of exchanging views with leaders of the region, and we thank in particular the Cambodian National Mekong Committee, and the Kingdom of Cambodia, for successfully organizing this 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit of the Mekong River Commission and the International Conference. We are grateful for this opportunity to engage in a productive dialogue.

This Statement is endorsed by Australia, Belgium, the European Union, France, Germany, IUCN, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States and the World Bank.