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RAPPORT DE LA COMMISSION DU MÉKONG

Note du secrétariat

Le secrétariat transmet tel quel à la Commission, pour information, le rapport de la Commission du Mékong¹.

¹ Le rapport de la Commission du Mékong est publié en anglais dans sa version originale. Toute question concernant ce rapport doit être adressée au secrétariat de la Commission du Mékong, à l'adresse suivante:

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Mekong River Commission



SIXTY-SECOND SESSION OF UNESCAP

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REPORT

OF ACTIVITIES FOR 2005

OF MEKONG RIVER COMMISSION (MRC)

MRC Secretariat
Vientiane, Lao PDR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In 2005, celebrations of the Tenth Anniversary of the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin and the establishment of the Mekong River Commission (MRC) took place with several important events for the Lower Mekong Countries and for the international community involved in water resources management.
2. In 2005, the MRC has prepared its new Strategic Plan for 2006-2010. Within the Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010, the fundamental strategic orientations of MRC, for “an economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin” remained. The new Strategic Plan, however, provides for an updated organizational, programme and budget structure. The document introduces the concept of The Mekong Programme, a regional programme for the Sustainable Development of Water and Related Resources in the Mekong Basin. This programme will allow the MRC to address the development opportunities of the Mekong Basin in a more comprehensive, balanced and sustainable manner. The year 2006 would see the implementation of the new Strategic Plan. An organizational review; report and strategy would also take place this year.
3. Programme implementation and preparation for start-up of new programmes continued to be main activities of the MRC with strong support from donors and partners. It can be noted that the Flood Management and Mitigation Programme started full implementation in 2005 and the Navigation Programme had also started major activities. Preparations for the Phase 2 of the Basin Development plan (BDP) took place in 2005, with a programme document approved by the MRC Council in December 2005. A joint donor mission was planned to appraise the BDP Phase 2 document in January 2006. Under the Water Utilization Programme, significant progress was made in 2005 both in terms of water utilization procedures and rules and in terms of modelling and decision support tools. The MRC also decided to develop an important number of new programmes, such as a Drought Management Programme, an Information and Knowledge Management Programme as well as an Hydropower Programme. Cooperation with the two MRC dialogue partners, the People’s Republic of China and the Union of Myanmar has been further strengthened.

REPORT

1. The MRC Council at its Twelfth Meeting in December 2005 reviewed the progress MRC had made during the year 2005 with respect to programme implementation, donor support and cooperation with upstream countries and other partners. Moreover, the Council examined and approved in principle the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010. This report provides a brief account of activities of the MRC in 2005.

I. Preparation of the MRC Strategic Plan 2006-2010

2. The current MRC programme was guided by the Strategic Plan 2001 - 2005 of the Mekong River Commission. In this context, the MRC Secretariat was tasked by the MRC Council to formulate the next Strategic Plan for the period 2006 - 2010. The formulation of the Strategic Plan was undertaken in a fully participatory process, reflecting the views of MRC member states.

3. The Strategic Plan for 2006-2010 is a comprehensive document which includes a general introduction and the setting of the Mekong development context. It also presents the goals and objectives of the MRC for 2006-2010. The mission and vision of the organisation remain but the goals and objectives have been changed to better fit with priorities of MRC Member Countries for the next five years. An implementation approach, including a more integrated programme approach and emphasizing complementarities with other regional initiatives was developed. Finally, the document has introduced the concept of "The Mekong Programme, a regional programme for the Sustainable Development of Water and Related Resources in the Mekong Basin".

4. The MRC Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 was approved in principle by the Council at its 12th Meeting. The Council requested the Joint Committee to further improve the details of the Strategic Plan. The Secretariat was requested to accommodate further comments in the Strategic Plan. At the 10th Donor Consultative Group meeting, donors issued a joint statement indicating their common views on the Strategic Plan. In this context, finalization and dissemination of the document is expected for the first half of 2006.

II. Programme Implementation

II.1. Core Programmes

II.1.1. Basin Development Plan (BDP)

5. The BDP objective is that water resources of the Mekong River Basin are managed and developed in an integrated and sustainable manner for the equitable benefit of the riparians. Phase 1 of the project would end by July 2006 and the BDP project phase 2 is now in preparation. A detailed BDP 2 project document was approved by the Council in December 2005. A joint mission of donors carried out an appraisal of the phase 2 of the programme in January 2006.

6. At the end of the extension of BDP Phase 1 by July 2006 the project will have produced a set of operational achievements. It will notably include: (1) a basin planning process established and ongoing; (2) a data system implemented and functional; (3) the publication of the "Strategic Directions for Integrated water Resources Management in the Lower Mekong Basin"; (4) a Projects Database and projects prioritized through a short-list agreed by MRC member states.

II.1.2. Water Utilization Programme (WUP)

7. The WUP is to establish effective mechanisms to improve water resources management for the economic and social development of the Mekong Basin in an environmentally sustainable manner. Discussions on a potential second phase of the programme are planned to take place in 2006.

8. The basin modelling tool, the DSF (Decision Support Framework) had been improved and actively used within the MRC, in preparation of scenario analyses in support of the technical study on Integrated Basin Flow Management. A review to assess the capacity of the MRC Member States to implement the DSF was undertaken and will support further capacity-building and training activities on the DSF. The drafting process for the Rules for Water Quality was successfully initiated. In technical support to the drafting of these Rules, national studies on water quality legislation and standards through four riparian consultancies were undertaken. The Guidelines on Implementation of the already approved Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement were approved by the MRC Joint Committee in August 2005. The Procedures for Maintenance of Flows in the Mainstream were endorsed at the 22nd JC Meeting for submission to the Council in December 2005. After the 12th Council meeting, further discussions at the highest political level would be required.

II.1.3. Environment Programme (EP)

9. The EP aims to ensure adequate protection of the environment and ecological balance in the Basin, in particular when developing its natural resources.

10. Environmental monitoring works continued in 2005, including water quality, ecological health and social impacts. Good progress has been made under the Indicative Mekong River Basin Report Card on the Basin's Environmental Conditions. Significant progress has also been made in the formulation of the Guidelines for a Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment System. Ecological Risk Assessments are being initiated in pilot areas. A provisional basinwide map of important wetland types is completed. A study to review information on sediment transport is to be linked to the Environmental Flows work and other work on sedimentation in the Tonle Sap. In addition, the MRC have well progressed in the framework of the Mekong River Basin Wetlands Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use Programme (MWBP) led by UNDP Lao PDR, as a joint initiative between UNDP, IUCN-the World Conservation Union, and the MRC to promote conservation and sustainable use of the biodiversity of wetlands in the Lower Mekong Basin.

II.1.4. Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP)

11. The objective of the FMMP is to prevent, minimize or mitigate people's suffering and economic losses due to floods, while preserving the environmental benefits of flood. The programme, launched at the third Annual Flood Forum (AFF) in April 2005, started its full implementation in 2005 and will gradually reach its planned implementation capacity in 2006.

12. The operation of the Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre (RFMMC) based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia started in April 2005. The forecasting function has been operated at the RFMMC during the 2005 flood forecasting season. In addition, a project on Provision of Flood Early Warning to Flood Vulnerable Communities in the Lower Mekong Basin in Cambodia and Lao PDR is currently being implemented. Flood emergency management strengthening activities commenced in September 2004 and full implementation was reached in 2005. In the same vein, the project on Capacity building for planning and implementing flood preparedness programs at provincial and district levels in the Lower Mekong Basin continued during the year 2005. Land Management activities started also on September 2004, with the objective to produce flood probability maps of pilot areas.

II.2. Support Programmes

II.2.1. Integrated Capacity Building Programme

13. The overall objective is to improve capacity of the MRC to implement its mission, play the leading role in coordinating the development and use of the basin's water resources and to meet stakeholder expectations. This would be achieved through availability of sufficient expertise in integrated river basin management and the required level of communication and stakeholder participation in MRC activities. One of the main components of this programme, the Junior Riparian Professional project has secured funds for operation until June 2006.

14. Four Junior Riparian Professionals (JRPs) (batch 1) have completed in early 2005 their three-year programme at the Secretariat. Two JRPs (batch 2) have completed their two-year programme in March 2005 and are continuing their third-year training at the Environment Programme and Flood Management and Mitigation Programme, based at the Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre in Phnom Penh. The third batch of JRPs joined the Secretariat in July 2004 and is currently receiving on-the-job training by the core programmes. There are currently five JRPs at the Secretariat. The implementation of the training programme for the Lao support staff after the relocation of the MRC Secretariat was completed in late 2005.

II.2.2. Decision Support and Information Management

15. MRC is planning to establish a consolidated Information and Knowledge Management Programme (IKMP), by 2006. The programme document is planned to be presented to the 24th JC meeting in August 2006. The objective of the programme would be to facilitate access and use by member governments, policy and decision makers, institutional developers, the donor and investment community and other stakeholders to comprehensive, up-to-date and objective data, information and decision support tools necessary to promote and co-ordinate the sustainable development of water and related resources in the Mekong Basin.

16. In 2005, Guidelines for Management of the MRC Hydrometeorological Network were formulated. The MRC-Information System has been further developed, including key information services such as interactive maps, geographically enabled metadata explorer with ISO format metadata for all spatial datasets, and a Document Management System (DMS) for sharing of electronic documents. An in-house launch of the MRC web-Portal occurred in early 2006. The hydro-meteorological data collection continued in 2005 with an improved quality, quantity and timely management. From 2006, the river monitoring network would be further developed under a new project Mekong-HYCOS which is currently being prepared in collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization. The implementation of the Procedures for Data and Information Exchange and Sharing and Procedures for Water Use Monitoring has also continued in the Member Countries.

II.3. Sector Programmes

II.3.1. Fisheries Programme (FP)

17. The objective of the Fisheries Programme is a coordinated and sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the fisheries of the Mekong Basin. The second phase of the programme will start up in 2006.

18. Many technical publications were produced through 2005 and posting onto websites. Publications included version 2 of its Fisheries Information CD, the fisheries newsletter *Catch and Culture*; a film of the fisheries in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam was also produced. Many publications were translated in riparian languages during 2005. "Mekong Fisheries Management Recommendations", a series of short publications providing orientation on particular fisheries management issues to policy makers were also produced. Reports on fish

migration patterns have been edited in several formats (technical and popular publications, and a CD). In 2005, emphasis was also put on the consolidation and propagation of examples of participatory local fisheries management, which can serve as models for the Lower Mekong Basin as a whole. In addition, a study comparing small scale aquaculture using indigenous species with aquaculture of alien species is nearing completion. The preliminary results indicate that indigenous species are economically feasible and also preferred by farmers.

II.3.2. Agriculture, Irrigation, and Forestry Programme (AIFP)

19. The development objective of the AIFP, as stated in the programme documentation (2001-2005) is to facilitate cooperative sustainable development and utilization of water and land in agricultural and forestry to the benefit of the basin community, and to contribute to poverty alleviation and food security. The programme as per the current programme document was completed by the end of 2005. Programme development of the programme for its 2nd Phase from 2006-2010 is ongoing.

II.3.2.1. Watershed Management Component

20. The project is carrying out a training series under the capacity building package of the project to strengthen capacity of the NMCs and staff from line agencies involved in watershed management in member states. In addition, a training course on “Information and Knowledge Management” was organized with participants from NMCs, different line agencies and relevant institutions. Workshops were organized to address the issue of incentives of different stakeholders in their land use practices that may or may not favour sustainable watershed management. Other workshops provided a forum for policy makers to exchange their views and experiences on institutional requirements and the changes needed to support sustainable watershed management. National Working Groups for Watershed Management are established in the four member countries and are collaborating regularly.

II.3.2.2. Water Use Efficiency Component

21. Activities under the project to Demonstrate Multi-functionality of Paddy Fields (DMPF) have well progressed in 2005. It included the improvement of agriculture and water use databases; and the review of irrigation, land use and rice crop data. Conversion of the data collected by Member Countries into GIS format has been completed. The third regional workshop on analysis of paddy field's functions was organized in late 2005 July to sum up the findings of the phase 1 of the project in the view to identify potential appropriate methodologies for the analysis of multi-functionality of paddy fields. Practical methods to increase water use efficiency, would be a new project under AIFP, under the title Improvement of Irrigation Efficiency Project which received funding in June 2005.

II.3.3. Hydropower Programme (HP)

22. In spite of its significance, the Hydropower Programme within the present MRC organization plays a modest role compared to that of other sectors. The programme has very limited resources at its disposal. Therefore, a wider Hydropower Programme is under formulation at the MRC Secretariat since December 2004. A programme concept was drafted in 2005 and a full programme document is expected for 2006.

23. Activities are currently carried out under the MRC Hydropower Strategy and cooperation with the BDP. It envisages cooperation structures with hydropower segments in the riparian countries to be established. In addition the objective is to provide advice on planning, development and operation of hydropower plants in the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB), in close consultation with the riparian governments and applying a regional IWRM planning perspective. It would include studies on costs and benefits of existing hydropower plants and dams to support identification of options for best hydropower development in LMB, and studies on the potential for improved efficiency, reduced power demand and savings in investments in the power sector in the riparian countries through demand side management and

other viable options. A Hydropower database is developed in the context of the BDP Projects Database.

II.3.4. Navigation Programme (NAP)

24. With receipt of funds in October 2005; 2006 will be the first year for actual large-scale implementation of the Navigation Programme. The overall objective of the programme is to promote freedom of navigation and increase the international trade opportunities for the MRC member countries' mutual benefit, and to assist in coordination and cooperation in developing effective and safe waterborne transport on the Mekong in a sustainable and protective manner for the waterway.

25. In 2005, the bilateral project in the framework of the NAP "Design of the Master Plan for Navigation on the Mekong River System in Cambodia" started. Together with other national navigation strategies and plans, it will feed into the formulation of the Regional Master Plan (comprehensive Investment Programme) for Waterborne Transport. The preliminary phase of the project "Installation of the aids to navigation on the Mekong River from Phnom Penh in Cambodia to Vam Nao Pass in Viet Nam" also started up this year.

II.3.5. Tourism Programme (TP)

26. Tourism in the Mekong Region, notably priority cultural tourism projects, represents a unique opportunity to create win-win cooperation among countries and enhance mutual benefits. In this respect, the MRC Council and the MRC Joint Committee have recommended to accelerate the development of the MRC Tourism Programme. The objective of the Programme would reflect the need to promote tourism within the Mekong River Basin in a balanced manner, which also ensures the necessary protection of the environment against adverse effects of tourism.

27. In 2005, activities started in the context of the Environment Programme. Activities and outputs include a study on environmental impacts of tourism; an assessment of the role of MRC in tourism and its links with other regional initiatives such as the Greater Mekong Subregion and the ASEAN; and the establishment of recommendations for the MRC Tourism Programme. It is expected that these activities will be completed at the end of 2006.

III. Donor Support

28. Donor support to MRC remained strong in 2005 with funding agreements amounting to about US\$ 9.2 million; and pledges and commitment of further support of approximate US\$ 33.8 million.

IV. Cooperation with Dialogue Partners

29. The MRC had fruitful and concrete discussions at the Tenth Dialogue Meeting on 1st September 2005 with China and Myanmar. A Secretariat mission to Beijing on 1-4 June 2005 at the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had also identified a number of potential expanded areas of cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Communications, Transport and Information within the existing framework of cooperation. The exchange of hydrological data with China in wet season has now become regular.

V. Communications and Cooperation with Other Partners

30. Information material on the MRC has been continuously produced to raise awareness on Integrated Water Resources Management in the Lower Mekong Basin with the Member

Countries and the general public. Celebrations of the Tenth Anniversary of the Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin and the establishment of the Mekong River Commission took place on 5 April 2005 in Vientiane. Further to this event, on 28-29 November 2005 in Chiang Rai, the MRC organized a Forum on Integrated Water Resources Management, which gathered representatives from government agencies, members of the National Mekong Committees, international organizations, development partners, civil society, representatives of universities and the media to promote regional IWRM in the Mekong Basin.

VI. Cooperation with Other River Basin Organisations

31. The dialogue continued with the Murray Darling Basin Committee in Australia and further cooperation is envisaged for 2006. Collaboration was also enhanced with the Mississippi River Basin Alliance further to the MOU signed between the Mekong River Commission, Mississippi River Basin Alliance and the University of Minnesota on 24 May 2004.