Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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Review of issues pertinent to the subsidiary structure of the Commission, including the work of the regional institutions: environment and development

Report of the Mekong River Commission

Summary


The Commission may wish to take note of the report.

Message from the Chairperson of the Mekong River Commission Council for 2013-2014

1. On behalf of the Mekong River Commission (MRC), I am pleased to present this Annual Report 2014. The MRC is concluding its fourth year of implementation of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015, and it has worked as hard as ever in the transition to become an organization based on core river basin management functions.

2. One of this year’s significant achievements was the Second MRC Summit, in Ho Chi Minh City in April 2014, where leaders of the four member countries renewed their commitment to the MRC at the highest political level. The Summit was preceded by an international conference on “Cooperation for Water, Energy and Food Security in Transboundary Basins under Changing Climate” that brought together experts, government officials and stakeholders.

3. The MRC Programmes made progress towards the implementation of their activities to meet the targets and objectives of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015. The MRC is updating its Basin Development Strategy for 2016-2020, which will be implemented through the Strategic Plan for that new period.
4. The MRC Secretariat has continued to address the effects of climate change in the Lower Mekong Basin through various studies and assessments from the Climate Change and Adaptation Initiative, the Environment Programme and the Agriculture and Irrigation Programme.

5. The Navigation Programme has worked with the member countries to protect river ecology and improve water quality through a series of training, risk assessments and the publication of useful guidelines for the transport of dangerous goods and waste management.

6. In line with the Hua Hin Declaration of 2010 and the Ho Chi Minh City Declaration this year, the MRC is expediting the implementation of the Council’s Study on Sustainable Management and Development of the Mekong River including the impacts of mainstream hydropower projects, to provide sound advice and recommendations on sustainable development in the basin.

7. The Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation, and Agreement (PNPCA) were implemented after Lao PDR submitted the Don Sahong Hydropower Project for Prior Consultation in June 2014. The project was submitted for Notification last year, but upon the recommendation of the other three notified countries, Lao PDR submitted it for Prior Consultation which allows them to discuss the project’s potential transboundary impacts. Under the guidance of a Joint Committee Working Group, the MRC Secretariat has produced a Technical Review Report to inform the Joint Committee to make a decision at the end of the six-month time frame early next year.

8. The decentralization and organizational reform was one of this year’s priorities and both the Joint Committee and the MRC Council agreed on fourteen recommendations for implementation. The national and regional roadmaps were approved and the process will carry on progressively during the next few years.

9. Efforts continued to hire the MRC’s first Riparian Chief Executive Officer and selected candidates will be interviewed in early 2015.

10. Cooperation with China has been strengthened through official technical visits, meetings and hydrological information sharing. Delegates from the Chinese Ministry of Water Resources and Tsinghua University visited the Office of the Secretariat in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in March, and in November, a delegation headed by Vice-Minister of Water Resources, H.E. Mr. JIAO Yong, visited the Office of the Secretariat in Vientiane, Lao PDR. China and Myanmar, the Dialogue Partners of the MRC, also participated in the Second MRC Summit.

11. On regional cooperation, the Secretariat has strengthened ties with different international organisations and intergovernmental bodies. The MRC increased its international exposure through the pre-summit International Conference in April in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam; the First Mekong-Rhine Symposium on Climate Change in Koblenz, Germany in May; and the Regional Workshop on interaction between environmental sustainability and human rights-based approach, in Bangkok, Thailand, in May.
12. The continuing support from the Development Partners has contributed to the achievements of the MRC in 2014. The MRC signed several agreements with Australia, Finland, Japan and Germany. Discussions with these and other development partners continue for the potential establishment of a pool fund as part of the organization’s financial reform.

13. I take this opportunity, on behalf of the MRC, to thank our development partners, dialogue partners and other stakeholders for their meaningful input into the work of the organization as it enters another year of transition and strategic changes. As we move into 2015, which marks 20 years of Mekong cooperation, I hope our partnerships become stronger and I am confident the MRC will continue to effectively address the new challenges facing the basin.

(Signed) General Dapong Ratana-suwan
Chairperson of the Mekong River Commission Council for 2013-2014
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment
Chairperson of the Thai National Mekong Committee
Member of the Mekong River Commission Council for Thailand