Positioning the Mekong River Commission (MRC) in the context of the Mekong Lancang Cooperation (MLC)

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1995 Mekong Agreement and MRC

- The 1995 Mekong Agreement (MA) gives the Mekong River Commission (MRC) a strong legal foundation.

- MRC has four members (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam) and two dialogue partners (China and Myanmar).

- Among the Mekong cooperation frameworks – the MRC is thus the only one founded by international treaty.

- The MA provides the MRC with a mandate: To promote and coordinate sustainable development and management of water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin for the countries’ mutual benefit and the people’s well-being.

- This mandate has been reaffirmed at the highest levels (3 Summits of prime ministers).

- The mandate is also operationalized through successful implementation of the MA for the past 23 years.
MRC is only one with agreed basin-wide Basin Development Strategy and basin strategies for climate change, fisheries, navigation, hydropower, flood, drought, environment, etc

Basin Wide Strategies – To optimize national plans
Guidelines to Enhance National Projects and Activities

- Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessment (TbEIA) guidelines
- Preliminary Guidance for Mainstream Dams (PDG)
- Integrated Flood Risks Management (IFRM) Guidelines
- Navigation Aids, Rules and Regulations
- Sustainable Watershed Management Guidelines
- Wetland Management
- Rapid Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Tool (RSAT)
A cooperative procedural framework for managing the basin
Extensive basin-wide monitoring

- Water flow and level
- Water quality
- Ecological health
- Fisheries
- Sediment
- Social impact
June-November flood season, the MRC Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre issues daily flood forecasts. Data from 138 hydro-meteorological stations is used to predict water levels at 23 forecast points on the Mekong River system. The MRC shares these daily bulletins by fax, e-mail, and on the MRC home page and dedicated Flood Forecasting Website to National Mekong Committees, Non-Governmental Organisations, the media, and, most importantly, the public.
ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENTS

Comprehensive knowledge base about the Mekong Basin

State of Basin Report 2003
State of Basin Report 2010
State of Basin Report 2018 (to be released soon)

Conditions of the Mekong basin in economic, social and environmental areas

BDP Assessment of Basin-wide Development Scenarios
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Mainstream Dams
ISH0306 Development of Guidelines for Hydropower Environmental Impact Mitigation and Risk Management in the Lower Mekong Mainstream
Study on Sustainable Development and Management of the Mekong River (Council Study)

Information about positive and negative impacts of developments in the Mekong
Stakeholder engagement, communication and partnership

IMPROVED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR MORE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE BASIN

PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION AND OUTREACH TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP AND MUTUAL LEARNING
Cooperation with China

China is a long standing Dialogue Partner of MRC – since 1996
Cooperation with China

- Holds annual Dialogue Meeting
- Regular exchange of visits
- Holds regular joint technical symposiums
- Participates in MRC technical activities such as basin development planning and sustainable hydropower
- Shares data and information during the flood season (June – Oct)
- Sent Junior officers to work at MRC
- Released “water supplement” during drought and conducted joint observation and prepared joint report
- Conducts “joint assessment” of impact of dam cascade on extreme events (with IWMI and Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center)
Cooperation with China

China participates actively in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} MRC Summit and International Conference

At the International Conference:

- Permanent Representative of China to ESCAP and MRC joined a senior panel of JC members
- Secretary-General of the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center gave keynote presentation highlighting the cooperation between China and MRC.

At the Summit, the Chinese Minister of Water Resources emphasized the important role of MRC, the cooperation given by China, the fact that Lancang Mekong Cooperation will not replace any existing mechanism, and welcomed the engagement of the MRC and its Secretariat in the LMC.
Cooperation with China

Technical exchanges with China in 2018

• MRCS invited and participated in several events hosted by China / Mekong Lancang Cooperation
  • Global Center for Mekong Studies (GCMS) Think Tank Forum in March 2018
  • China-ASEAN Youth Talents Exchange Programme on Water Resources in June 2018
  • High-Level Technical Exchange Seminar on Integrated Small Watershed Management between China and Mekong River Countries in Beijing and Wenzhou, China in August 2018

• A Chinese technical delegation visited Cambodia and Thailand’s hydrological stations on the Mekong in May 2018

• Upcoming event: MRCS invited to 1st Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Forum on 1-2 Nov. 2018

• MRCS will be inviting China to:
  • 5th Regional Stakeholder Forum on 20-21 September 2018
  • Workshop and training on collaborative modelling and uptake of the Council Study on 22-23 October 2018
What does this all mean?

• MRC is a well-established inter-governmental River Basin Organization in the Mekong with the knowledge base, basin-wide strategies, procedures, and water diplomacy platform – the ONLY one that is mandated by treaty. There is both political commitment from Mekong leaders and financial commitment.

• Other Mekong frameworks are programmes, platforms, projects-based, etc

• MRC, and MRCS, have long standing cooperation with China. We have welcomed Mekong Lancang Cooperation framework. We have increasingly engaged with it.

• MRC Joint Committee members sit on the MLC Joint Working Group on Water Resources. Formal and informal information is regularly shared.

• MRCS stands ready to continue to work closely with the LM Water Resources Cooperation Center, including formalize our partnership.