

## RECORD OF THE TWENTY-SECOND DIALOGUE MEETING

### GENERAL

1. The MRC's Twenty Second Dialogue Meeting (the Meeting) was held on 26 November 2018 back to back with the Preparatory Meeting of the MRC Joint Committee for the Twenty Fifth Meeting of the MRC Council in Ha Long City, Viet Nam.

2. The Meeting was chaired by **H.E. Mr. Te Navuth**, Permanent Vice Chairman, Cambodia National Mekong Committee, Member of the MRC Joint Committee for Cambodia, Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2018. The Chairperson was assisted by the Chief Executive Officer of the MRC Secretariat (the CEO). The Meeting was attended by 65 participants from all the MRC Member Countries, the People's Republic of China, Mr. Sein Htoon Linn, Deputy Director General, Environmental Conservation Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, and Directors and other concerned Staff of the MRC Secretariat (**Annex 1: List of Participants**).

#### **A. Opening Address by the Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2018**

3. The Chairperson of the Joint Committee (JC) for 2018 welcomed delegates from all the MRC Member Countries (MCs) and Dialogue Partners, to the Twenty Second Dialogue Meeting and thanked them for their presence and participation. Proceeding further, the Chairperson recalled some historical background of the cooperation between China and Myanmar and MRC as well as the recent enhanced technical cooperation between China and MRC, including China's notification for the MRC when there are changes in the operations of its hydropower stations on the mainstream upper part; the emergency water release to ease drought conditions in the lower reaches of the basin in 2016; joint studies to understand more of the hydrological conditions and their changing impacts on the basin. For Myanmar, the cooperation activities include exchanges of monitoring and water quality data and sharing technical expertise in flood prevention and management. Before opening the session, the Chairperson called for a more enhanced regional cooperation for the sustainable future of the Mekong and its resources and people through wider cooperation opportunities and joint commitment for concrete actions for the so called shared river, shared future. The Chairperson thanked all the Dialogue Partners for their engagement and increased cooperation on the work of the MRC and the MRC Secretariat and Viet Nam National Mekong Committee for their excellent preparation and coordination to make the Meeting a success.

#### **B. Statement by the Head of Delegation for the People's Republic of China (Annex 2)**

#### **C. Statement by the Head of Delegation for the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (Annex 3)**

#### **Adoption of the Agenda**

4. The Chairperson sought comments on the agenda from the floor. The Meeting adopted the agenda with proposed changes incorporated accordingly if any (**Annex 4: Adopted Agenda**).

## **D. Achievements Since the 21<sup>st</sup> Dialogue Meeting (Presented by the Chief Executive Officer)**

5. To begin with, the CEO highlighted a high level participation by China in the MRC's International Conference and Third Summit in Siem Reap, re affirming China's strong commitment to encouraging the MRC Member Countries to work with the Lancang Mekong Cooperation (LMC) alongside the existing cooperation mechanisms so as to create a needed synergy for the benefits of all. The CEO showcased this synergy by raising a Memorandum of Understanding between the MRCS and the Lancang Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Centre (LMWRCC) and the MRCS's proposal to have an "Observer Status" for the Joint Working Group on Water Resources. In addition, the CEO also proposed that the MRC serve as a dialogue partner of the Lancang Mekong Cooperation, just like China being a dialogue partner of the MRC for the last 22 years. As a basis for more cooperation initiatives between MRC and China, the CEO raised the many exchanges between China and the Mekong Lancang Cooperation and crucial technical cooperation activities jointly materialized by MRC and China such as the Joint Research on Hydrological Impacts of the Lancang Hydropower Cascade on Downstream Extreme Events and the State of Basin Report incorporating the Upper Mekong in China and Myanmar based on data and information shared by China and data from official and publicly available sources. As for Myanmar, the highlights include a high level participation from Myanmar in the MRC International Conference and Third Summit and the re affirmation of Myanmar's Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation highlighting the crucial role of enhanced cooperation with the MRC. Chief among the CEO's initiatives are the opportunities for enhancing collaboration with both China and Myanmar based on the proposals that the China and Myanmar's ministers identified in the Summit. Two possibilities were put forward for the partners' consideration a possibility for the Shan state and Lancang riparian provinces of China like Yunnan to join the MRC on a trial basis for a limited time frame and without membership fees to start with – much like the admission as members for the member states of Greater Mekong subregion. Before ending his report, the CEO thanked all the Joint Committee Members and Dialogue Partners for their continued support and cooperation with the MRC.

### **E.1 Information on Cooperation between China and MRC (Presented by China)**

6. China's delegate reported to the Meeting the following information including water resources development in the Lancang River, water resources cooperation between China and MRC, further prospective for cooperation, bilateral water resources cooperation between China and Mekong countries. **Detail of the E.1 PPT content could be found in the Annex 5 to this Record.**

### **E.2 Information on the Hydrological Conditions in the Mekong Basin (presented by MRC)**

7. The Secretariat reported to the Meeting the general hydrological conditions in the Lower Mekong Basin for the period from August 2017 to September 2018, covering four main parts: (1) rainfall conditions over the basin; (2) river monitoring on the mainstream; (3) reverse flows to the Tonle Sap Lake; and (4) current drought condition in the lower Mekong basin.

8. Lao PDR appreciated the report by the Secretariat and asked if knowledge regarding the work on the Hydrological conditions would be transferred to the Member Countries. Lao PDR asked if reliability of the data on water flows would be able to be examined.

9. Cambodia thanked for and took note of the report by the Secretariat and requested more attention be paid on the effective actions in further improving the hydromet monitoring and analysis of the conditions, early warning and reporting system of the LMB for the Member Countries given climate change and projects development on the mainstream and tributaries in Cambodia.

10. The Chairperson sought clarification as to whether there is a linkage for analysis of the condition connected to the upper part of the Mekong. In response, the Secretariat clarified the analysis was done mainly for the Lower Mekong Basin. However, there were some connections such as the condition at Chiang Saen which is closer to the upper parts of the Mekong.

11. The Meeting took note with appreciation of the report by the Secretariat.

#### **F. Information on the water resources development and management in Myanmar, including Mekong basin (presented by Myanmar)**

12. Myanmar's representative reported to the Meeting on 1) water potentials in Myanmar, 2) water related agencies and their functions, 3) water policy and law, 4) National Water Resources Committee (NWRC), 5) causes to water pollution, 6) challenges to water management, 7) international collaboration, 8) Mekong River Basin, and 9) Lower Mekong Initiative. **Detail of the F. PPT would be found in Annex 6 to this Record.**

13. The Chairperson sought clarification as to whether Myanmar has any development activities on the Mekong or with the MRC. In response, the Myanmar representative noted for the time being there has been no recent joint activities yet with the MRC.

14. The Secretariat would like to propose some activities such as the Hydromet station information sharing as well as flood forecasting and exchange of flood information with Myanmar.

#### **H.1 Potential cooperation between the MRC and the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation mechanism (presented by China)**

15. Mr. Li Hong presented more information on the potential cooperation between the MRC Secretariat and the Mekong Lancang Cooperation mechanism as follows:

- Keep open mind for the cooperation between MRC and LMC.
- Support active role of the MRC in water resources cooperation on the framework of LMC
- Support further and explore practical and technical cooperation.

16. China's representative provided a detailed presentation of the cooperation areas as follows:

- 5 year action plan implementation of the water resources cooperation centre
- Joint research
- Training programme
- Capacity building programme

17. Mr. Li Hong further emphasized the genuine intention of China to keep dialogue and cooperation with MRC. Mr. Li Hong added that Lancang Mekong Cooperation is the mechanism among 6 countries, so any cooperation should be discussed within the six countries of the LMC.

18. The Chairperson articulated the type of cooperation for the MRC: **Cooperation framework between MRC and LMC and that between the MRC and its Dialogue Partners.**

#### **H.2 Progress on the Joint Research on Hydrological Impacts of the Lancang Hydropower Cascade on Downstream Extreme Events (presented by MRC)**

19. The Secretariat then presented to the Meeting the said Joint Research including 1) objective, 2) scope of the Joint Research, 3) data and method, 4) expected outputs, 5) budget, 6) process and progress, and 7) next steps. As for the next plan, drafted section reports from all the parties will be synthesized and compiled by the MRCS to produce one

draft technical report. Then, the draft report will be prepared and circulated to the Lancang Mekong Countries for their inputs and suggestions. Finally, the technical report and its findings will be disseminated through appropriate channels and future Joint Regional Workshop with participation from all the relevant stakeholders.

20. China informed the Meeting of their discussion to expedite the joint research's report soon and incorporating with the Thai side on another project.

21. Cambodia thanked for the joint research between the MRC and China but viewed the joint research's final results and findings still need to be discussed to support objective and accurate assessment, and this requires further comprehensive consultations and agreement by the Member Countries.

22. Lao PDR suggested involvement in the joint research in order to build the capacity for Lao PDR and that it contribute some available data for the joint research since quality data should be essential in determining the validity of the findings.

23. The Secretariat informed it planned to complete its work by end of February next year, by which it hopes the China side's work will have been combined to finalise the report.

24. The Meeting took note of the comments and report provided by the Secretariat.

#### **I. Enhancing cooperation with Dialogue Partners (presented by MRC)**

25. For this agenda, the Secretariat started first with the presentation on the current cooperation between MRC and both China and Myanmar, followed by future cooperation potential actions based on areas of cooperation proposed by both China and Myanmar. For China, the following proposed areas of cooperation include 1) Strengthen the connectivity of the development strategies, 2) Enhance regional mechanism collaboration, and 3) Practical cooperation welcomes MRC and its Secretariat to play a constructive role in Lancang Mekong water resources cooperation. As for Myanmar, the proposed areas of cooperation are 1) exchange of water professionals, 2) sharing more data and information on the status of developments; exchanging relevant monitoring and water quality data; institutionalizing a more extensive information sharing system on river flows and reservoir operations, 3) joint technical studies and capacity building in flood and drought management, 4) future collaboration between Myanmar and MRC can be accelerated through National Water Resources Committee, and 5) support for the MRC's "whole basin" approach through cooperation with the upper riparian countries.

#### **For China:**

- Strengthen connectivity within ASEAN
- Invite China for input and contribute to the process
- Enhance regional cooperation mechanism
- Integrate MRC's cooperation mechanism such as the EG – back to back to this meeting so as to enable information sharing from LMC related to the Mekong
- Practical cooperation to work further in LMC given China's wealth of experience of water management.
- Exchange visits between MRC and China's centre
- Revise the JRP Programme to have colleagues from China and Myanmar from next year

#### **For Myanmar:**

- Re examine either existing or new stations for hydrological monitoring
- Joint technical studies and visit
- Flood and droughts management
- Capacity building
- Invite Myanmar for updating the State of Basin Report

26. Thailand provided the following observations:

- On the State of the Basin Report, the views and comments from China and Myanmar on the chapter on the Upper Mekong are very important before proceeding further to the finalization.
- On the cooperation with Myanmar, Thailand wished to see the strategy and cooperation plan with Myanmar finalized. Thailand noted practical contribution is necessary for sustainable development for the region as a whole.
- On the cooperation between MRC and the Mekong Lancang Cooperation (MLC), Thailand shared the view of China that duplication should be avoided and should first focus on the practical issues of water resources development and management between MRCS and the Mekong-Lancang Water Resource Cooperation Centre. Despite a number of activities participated by the MRCS, the role of the MRC Member Countries should be thought through, beyond study visits. This would have to be worked out among the MRC Member Countries and the MRCS. Regarding the recently launched MLC Special Fund Project initiated by Thailand, Thailand would update the progress of the project.
- On the Lancang Hydro Cascade Joint Research, the Member Countries should be informed of its progress regularly and in a timely manner.
- On the proposal of the MRCS to invite the Shan State of Myanmar and Yunnan Province of China to be temporary MRC members, Thailand reminded the MRCS that Article 39 of the 1995 Mekong Agreement contains a provision on new membership which should be followed.

27. In summary, Thailand acknowledged that at the moment there are two parallel tracks of cooperation with the MRC dialogue partners: the traditional cooperation between MRC-China and MRC-Myanmar, on the one hand; and the MRC-MLC cooperation, on the other. Therefore, all the parties concerned need to identify the respective roles of the two tracks, to ensure their complementarity, prevent competition, and avoid duplication.

28. Myanmar noted it has not received the State of Basin Report thus far and would be discussing how it would contribute to the Report once it obtains the report. On the JRP programme, Myanmar would be considering how to take appropriate action to send their JRPs to be on board from next year.

29. Cambodia took note of the progress and cooperation with China and Myanmar and would like to have a concept note and the roadmap based on the proposed potential actions and those could be used to supplement the existing gaps – technical and financial – being implemented by the MRC Member Countries covering the area of sustainable development and environment management of the Lower Mekong Basin, trade offs, Basin Development Strategy, integrated water resources management, stakeholder engagement and capacity building and so on.

30. Lao PDR congratulated the MRC's cooperation proposal and suggested a clear planning and concrete actions including financial allocation be done regarding those proposed cooperation activities by the Secretariat.

31. Viet Nam appreciated the cooperative and constructive spirit exhibited by all the Delegates and noted with appreciation the statement made by China regarding cooperation between the MRC and MLC. Viet Nam was of the view that cooperation between the two mechanisms should be comprehensive and therefore shared the suggestion made by China focusing first on technical cooperation between the MRCS and the MLC's Water Resource Center. Viet Nam also believed that the outcomes of today's dialogue inspired by the progress of joint research and joint efforts in preparing SOBR would serve as a foundation

for further technical cooperation between MRC and China. Viet Nam is currently preparing for the MLC's upcoming Working Group on water resources which would be an opportunity for the six countries to strengthen mutual understanding on common challenges and foster more fruitful and productive cooperation based on cooperative and constructive spirit, as demonstrated during the First Water Resources Cooperation Forum in Kunming earlier this month.

32. While welcoming the good cooperation areas and activities, China informed further discussions with line ministries and agencies would be needed. China was pleased to see such a robust and productive discussion in this meeting and looked forward to more discussions and cooperation soon.

**J. Date and Venue of the Twenty-Third Dialogue Meeting**

33. The Meeting should be held back to back with 49<sup>th</sup> JC Meeting during the third quarter of 2019. The Secretariat would consult with the Member Countries on the date and venue of the next Dialogue Meeting and informed the Dialogue Partners accordingly.

**K. Review of the Draft Report of the 22nd Dialogue Meeting**

**L. Closing Statement by the Chairperson of the MRC Joint Committee for 2018**

34. Considering the session's discussions substantive, rich and fruitful through the engagement in open and constructive dialogue, the Chairperson thanked all the participants and was fully convinced all the consultations and contributions on various matters in today's session would contribute to a better knowledge and understanding of the basin conditions, rendering the MRC more relevant, efficient and effective in its response to the latest development in the Mekong region. Before closing, the Chairperson reiterated his appreciation to the MRC Secretariat for organizing this event, Viet Nam National Mekong Committee for hosting and all other National Mekong Committees for their facilitation provided to their delegates.

The Summary Record was adopted on 26 November 2018 in Ha Long City, Viet Nam.