



**Joint Statement on Strengthening Coordination among the  
Friends of the Lower Mekong  
August 1, 2019 Bangkok, Thailand**

The Heads of Delegation of the Friends of the Lower Mekong, including Australia, Cambodia, the European Union, Japan, Lao PDR, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the United States, Viet Nam, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank (hereinafter referred to as “the FLM”), on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the FLM and the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the LMI, shared the intention to:

Recognize that the members of the FLM value their engagement with the countries of the Mekong region as strategically important, and regard their respective efforts as integral to their engagement with ASEAN as a whole, as well as their respective approaches to the broader Indo-Pacific;

Reaffirm their commitment to shared principles and values that have underpinned peace and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region for decades including a commitment to sovereignty, openness, transparency, integrity, inclusivity, good governance, ASEAN centrality, a rules-based order with respect for international law, and complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks. In this respect, we welcome the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which will further assist in advancing these shared values;

Welcome the alignment and complementary focus of the respective approaches of the development partners of the FLM, at the policy and programmatic level, including in areas of sustainable development, water, energy, and food security and natural resource management, environment and health issues, education, connectivity, women’s empowerment and gender equality, private sector engagement, and other areas; and

Welcome also the substantive and extensive collective efforts of the FLM in support of the Mekong region, through their respective bilateral and regional programs including as follows:

**Asian Development Bank:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supports the principles of the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) under the auspices of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation Program, where ADB serves as the secretariat since its inception in 1992. As of July 2019, almost \$23 billion from GMS members, ADB and development partners have supported GMS projects. The latest GMS Regional Investment Framework 2022 Update includes 247 projects requiring about \$81 billion to be mobilized from development partners, including the ADB, the private sector and GMS members. ADB is committed to keep its engagement with and leverage partnerships for the GMS Program. ADB is now helping the GMS Program prepare its new strategy through 2030.

**Australia:** Australia will provide over \$AUD600 million this year in bilateral and regional official development assistance to support a Southeast Asia – including a Mekong sub region – that is secure, prosperous and stable. We are strengthening economic governance, enhancing accountable institutions and supporting long term humanitarian efforts in the region. For the Mekong sub region, Australia’s regional programs are increasingly focusing on improving water governance, addressing transnational crime, expanding cooperation in connectivity and quality infrastructure, and supporting other organizations and frameworks such as the Mekong River Commission and ACMECS. It is doing so through its long-running Greater Mekong Water Resources Program and new investments including the Southeast Asia Economic Governance and Infrastructure Initiative and Mekong - Australia Partnership: Transnational Crime.



**European Union (EU):** All countries of the Lower Mekong Basin currently benefit from an overall €250 million package of EU support to ASEAN regional integration for 2014-2020. The EU's Development Cooperation Instrument supports several regional programmes focusing on strengthening the Mekong River Commission, sustainable freight and logistics, non-state actors in forest governance, combatting climate change, preserving biodiversity, supporting farmers' organizations and sustainable management of natural resources. In addition, the EU also supports student mobility in the region, harmonization of education standards and effective migration management to protect women migrant workers' rights. Over the same period, the EU is providing over €1.6 billion of bilateral development support to Lower Mekong countries to promote SDGs and further deepen their regional integration. These efforts are complemented by €187 million for humanitarian assistance and €44 million for disaster preparedness.

**Japan:** Mekong-Japan Cooperation holds a Ministerial meeting and a Summit meeting every year since 2008. Last year, at the 10<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Summit meeting in Tokyo, the leaders adopted "the Tokyo Strategy 2018", which described the future orientation of Mekong-Japan Cooperation and set three main pillars: "Vibrant and Effective Connectivity," "People-Centered Society," and "Realization of a Green Mekong." The strategy includes three attachments listing up more than 150 Mekong-Japan cooperation projects which contribute to (i) the promotion of SDGs in the region, (ii) the realization of a free and open Indo-Pacific and (iii) the stronger coordination between Mekong-Japan Cooperation and ACMECS. In addition, Prime Minister Abe declared that Japan would implement capacity building projects for about 30,000 people in the areas of (i) AI and other industries, and (ii) SDGs. At the coming 11<sup>th</sup> Mekong-Japan Summit meeting this autumn, the leaders will adopt the "Mekong-Japan Initiative for SDGs toward 2030."

**New Zealand:** New Zealand co-founded the Mekong Institute with Thailand in 1995 to address regional development, good governance, and trade and investment challenges in the Greater Mekong sub-region. Over the three years to 2021, New Zealand will provide \$144 million in development assistance, both bilaterally and through regional initiatives to countries in the Mekong region. This includes a number of projects in the Mekong region focusing on good governance, climate resilient agriculture, disaster risk management, renewable energy, and knowledge and skills.

**Republic of Korea (ROK):** The ROK has provided \$3.565 billion's worth of ODA to the four Mekong countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam, which accounts for 21 percent of its total bilateral ODA from 1987 until 2018. Moreover, the ROK has contributed approximately \$7.4 million to the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF) since its founding in 2013 to further promote the Mekong-ROK Cooperation under the six areas of Infrastructure, Information and Communications Technology, Green Growth, Water resources management, Agriculture and rural development, and Human resources development. Also, the ROK and the US agreed to implement a joint project of 'Water Data Utilization Platform Prototype and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region', which is expected to be launched this year for the sustainable development of the Mekong region. The ROK has officially joined as an ACMECS Development Partner. The ROK will host the inaugural Mekong-ROK Summit back-to-back with the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit this year in Korea.



**United States:** Over the last 10 years, U.S. agencies have provided over \$3.8 billion in assistance to the countries of the Mekong. In 2017, total U.S. investment in the region was \$17 billion, while two-way trade was \$109 billion in 2018. Over 33,000 students from the five Mekong countries were enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities in 2018, and over 72,000 of the region's youth are part of the U.S.-led Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI). The Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) has held programs since 2009 to strengthen the region's human capital in the areas of water, energy, and food security, smart infrastructure, STEM education, health, and women's empowerment. To supplement LMI, the United States is expanding its Mekong regional efforts on combating transnational crime and trafficking, and energy infrastructure development.

**World Bank:** The World Bank has supported transboundary cooperation and water resources management of the Mekong River for almost 20 years and has provided about US\$19 million in direct support to the Mekong River Commission first through: i) Water Utilization Project (2000-2008, US\$11 million); and then through ii) Mekong Integrated Water Resources Management Project – Regional Component (2012-2019, US\$8 million). We also have significant national level engagements, including lending operations and/or advisory services and analytics across all countries of the Mekong River Basin, currently totaling about US\$890M.

For the sustainable and efficient development of the Mekong region, the Heads of Delegation of the FLM further shared the intention to:

Explore ways to expand information sharing among the members of the FLM, as well as other regional Mekong mechanisms; and

Consider concrete, programmatic ways to cooperate more closely on their respective regional efforts, where appropriate and mutually beneficial.

The member countries of the FLM as well as the EU and the ADB further shared the intention to:

Support the development of cooperation frameworks among Mekong countries such as ACMECS, CLMV and CLV and consider ways to support their work plans, including the ACMECS Master Plan, by strengthening complementarity between FLM development partner efforts and the goals of those plans;

Support the role of the Mekong River Commission as the only inter-governmental organization, mandated by treaty, to work directly with governments of the region in collaboration with its member countries to jointly manage the shared water resources and sustainable development of the Mekong River, including by serving as a regional knowledge hub on water resources management, and ensuring mutually beneficial development of the River in ways that minimize harmful effects on society and the environment in the Mekong Basin; and

Advance implementation of the 2018 FLM-Mekong River Commission (MRC) Joint Statement to Strengthen Water Data Management and Information Sharing in the Mekong through the Mekong Water Data Initiative.



## **HEADS OF DELEGATION:**

**Mr. Alfredo Perdiguero**, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank

**Senator the Hon Marise Payne**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women, Australia

**His Excellency Mr. Prak Sokhonn**, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia

**Her Excellency Mrs. Federica Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European Union

**His Excellency Mr. Taro Kono**, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

**His Excellency Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lao PDR

**His Excellency U Kyaw Tin**, the Union Minister for International Cooperation of Myanmar

**The Right Honourable Winston Peters**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand

**Her Excellency Mrs. Kang Kyung-wha**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea

**His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

**The Honorable Michael Pompeo**, the Secretary of State of the United States of America

**His Excellency Mr. Pham Binh Minh**, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam

**Miss. Jyoti Shukla**, Director, The World Bank Group