

MRC Opportunities and Challenges

May 1, 2008

Statements by the MRC Delegation

Sin Ninny, Cambodia

- Columbia River system is all well developed. Request your help to develop the Mekong River. We would like to know how the MRC can develop hydropower, irrigation, water supply, fisheries, navigation, etc.
- Our region has the most diverse inland fisheries in the world.
- Hope USACE will be able to help in the near future

Chanthavong Saignasith, Laos PDR

- The Mekong has twice the flows of the Columbia. We have aquatic resources, large watersheds, and forestry.
- Now that peace is here, we have been able to put more effort on development.
- Lao PDR is still classified by the UN as one of the world's least developed countries. We need to raise the poverty line and maximize the use of water resources.
- Lao PDR contributes 30% of the Mekong's runoff, but less than 10% of the river's hydro potential has been developed so far.
- Only 400,000 hectares of land have been used for irrigation –not a very large area. Not a very high priority for agriculture either.
- Lao Government should concentrate on hydropower. The real challenge is how to do so in full compliance with the 1995 Agreement and how to maintain present conditions.
- Lao population increases by about 2% per year; and is subject to high price of oil.
- We need to get a better understanding of the Mekong basin, and learn from other countries.

Adisak Thongkaimook, Thailand

- Our thanks to USACE. This is one of the best technical visits ever. And very useful too.
- Next time we will need to discuss technology transfer.
- We have a lot of young engineers.
- We need to ensure good cooperation from the stakeholders.
- We will use the information gained to improve the MRC approaches.

Nguyen Hong Toan, Viet-Nam

- Thank you, USACE. We have learned a lot from the presentations, especially the system highlights, and the Treaty. We will have to learn how to apply to the MRC. Will be useful for the 1995 Agreement implementation. We need flexibility, a win-win situation that is better for all 4 countries and apply it to river management.

- Jerry Priscoli's presentation was very interesting. Our ministry will organize a body based on Jerry's models in trying to balance hydro and the environment, and to promote development.
- Crucial lesson learned: stakeholder partnerships – a very valuable lesson. You have a very open approach to sharing information with the public, and maintaining good relationships between the Government and the community.
- We want to seek advice from you, because the Mekong has no mainstem project; only tributary projects. In 1994 ADB started looking at mainstem projects, so 15 years from now, we may see mainstem projects built.
- Clearly we need hydropower to spearhead economic development. Thailand and Viet-Nam are rice exporters; fisheries potential is huge on the Tonle Sap and Mekong Delta.
- Hydro, fisheries, irrigation are important topics in our dialog with China and Burma, who are now more open to the outside world and can be our development partners.
- There are several challenges on our plate.
 - 1) For economic development, we will need more water.
 - 2) We need to account for differences in national interests;
 - 3) We need to formulate our strategy for International Water Management, including setting up scenarios to formulate location framework;
 - 4) Improve basin development plan (BDP);
 - 5) We need capacity building and international support; Australia is helping, but we need more help; and
 - 6) Public participation: how to involve all the sectors, organize international forums, where we would invite the Corps to provide key note addresses.

Jeremy Bird, MRC Secretariat

- Thanks you, USACE.
- We had to go back to the 1960's and look at the earlier plans.
- We need to rekindle.
- Will certainly invite you to the Mekong region.