

OPENING ADDRESS

By

H.E Mr. Sin Niny

Vice Chairman of Cambodia National Mekong Committee

Member of the MRC Joint Committee for Cambodia

Dr Olivier Cogels, Chief Executive Officer of the MRCS;

Dr. Armand Evers, First Secretary Integrated Water Resources Management, Royal Netherlands Embassy, Hanoi-Vietnam;

Excellencies;

Donors, Partners and International Organisations Representatives;

Distinguished Delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, it is a great pleasure and honour for me to attend this important Fourth Annual Mekong Flood Forum, organised by the Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre (RFMMC) of the Mekong River Commission, which marks yet another advance in the Centre's operation.

On this particular occasion I would like to extend a warm welcome to all distinguished delegates, donor representatives, international organisations, MRC partners and especially MRC dialogue partners of the upstream countries, Myanmar and China who will join us tomorrow with paper contributions.

This Forum is the first such event to be organised to discuss the current state of flood forecasting and warning systems at national and regional levels in the Lower Mekong Basin, as well as to expose the region to the international experience and state-of-the-art technology used in the betterment of flood forecasting and warning services.

The theme of this year's forum "*Improving Flood Forecasting and Warning Systems for Flood Management and Mitigation in the Lower Mekong Basin*" reflects the current needs and great joint efforts made by the governments of MRC member countries—Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam—in managing and mitigating floods in the Lower Mekong Basin. Each year these floods claim many lives and cause severe damage to agriculture, rural infrastructure and livestock.

The MRC recognises the regional significance of flood forecasting and is carrying out flood forecasting activities along the main stream of the Mekong River. While the present efforts are producing useful information, it has been recognised that warning systems have limited use if they do not reach the people to be warned in time and in a manner for taking preparatory actions.

Flood forecasting and warning is a complex task and significant damage reduction can only be achieved if the whole range of necessary flood forecasting and warning activities is implemented and well coordinated, starting from a high-quality database and information, competent and qualified human resources, state-of-the-art supporting tools and models, and appropriate communication technologies for warning dissemination.

The MRC's Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre is aware that there is a need for improved operational flood forecasting and is taking on this challenge to increase forecast accuracy, timing and streamlining links to national flood forecasting of the MRC member states.

Improving the usefulness of forecasts by integrating the forecasts and warnings with all elements of floodplains is of great importance in flood risk reduction at both national and regional levels.

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next two days, we will hear thematic presentations and discussions on the current state of flood forecasting and warning systems at both national and regional levels, up-to-date forecasting and warning technologies and its practical applications in other river basins, and lessons learned from evaluating forecasting and warning products by flood-at-risk communities.

I am truly confident that this Forum will produce fruitful results and useful recommendations. And based upon outcomes of this Forum, the MRC-RFMMC, MRC member countries, line agencies, and national, international and civil society organisations will be able to have a better understanding of the present systems of flood forecasting and warning in the region. I also hope this forum will introduce them to the available state-of-the-art technology that can help improve their services, and strengthen their capability and collaboration mechanisms for improving flood forecasting and warning systems in the Lower Mekong Basin in order to better address the aspects of human security due to flood, development and environment.

Before concluding, I would like to take this occasion to express my profound gratitude and thanks to the governments of The Netherlands, Germany, France, Denmark, Japan and the United States and other development partners, namely, the Asian Development Bank and the European Commission for their continuing support for the MRC's Flood Management and Mitigation Programme.

To conclude my opening address, I would like to declare the Fourth Annual Mekong Flood Forum open and I hope every participant has the opportunity to make a productive contribution and that everyone has a pleasant stay in this magnificent land of historical treasures.

Thank you.