

OPENING REMARKS BY MR. CHANTHAVONG

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At the Stakeholder consultation on the MRC Basin Development Plan Programme

Vientiane, 12-13 March 2008

Representatives from the Governments of Member states of the Mekong River Commission,

Representatives from the Donor community and Partner organizations

Representatives from Academia, Civil society organizations and NGOs

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor to speak on behalf of the Mekong River Commission Joint Committee at this important event of the MRC – The Stakeholder consultation on the Basin Development Plan Programme.

First of all, I would like to thank all of you - representatives from member governments, colleagues from the National Mekong Committees, representatives from academia, civil society organizations, colleagues and friends from the Donor community and Partner organizations – for your participation in this Consultation on how to undertake the Basin Development Plan in the Mekong River Basin. Your presence here today gives a strong message that planning for the development and management of the Mekong Basin is the business of all of us.

As many of you know, the 1995 Mekong Agreement tasks the Joint Committee of the Mekong River Commission with an important task to prepare the Basin Development Plan, that will serve as “the blueprint to identify, categorize and implement projects for seeking assistance for and implementation at the Basin level”. Joint planning based on

sound knowledge base and proven tools is an important function of International River Basin Organization like the MRC. Joint planning is perhaps the most important trigger for the achievement of the shared vision of the member states of the Lower Mekong Basin for “An economic prosperous, environmentally sound and social just Mekong River Basin”.

Over the next two days, we will discuss the socio-economic development dimensions in the Mekong River Basin and their interrelations with water and related resources of the Mekong River. We will be introduced to the Basin Development Programme of the MRC that has been designed to facilitate the joint planning process for the development of the Lower Mekong Basin. I do hope that the two day Consultation will provide a good opportunity for us to discuss what should be the role of the MRC and its Basin Development Plan Programme, the role other stakeholders including Government agencies, Civil society organizations and academia in managing the sustainable development of our Mekong River Basin. We look forward to receiving your valuable comments and suggestions on how the Basin development planning process as reflected in the Draft Inception Report, should take place, how to ensure the credibility of the methods and tools used that will facilitate acceptance of the Basin Development Plan - the main outcome of the Programme. This Plan, as envisaged in the 1995 Mekong Agreement, should contribute to sustainable development in each of the member states while preserving the riverine ecosystem and promoting regional cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Stakeholder Consultation is the first one in a potential series of consultations and dialogues that the MRC Basin Development Plan Programme will organize over the next three years to ensure that the Plan that will be adopted and implemented by the four Member states of the Lower Mekong Basin, will duly take into account the interests and views of diverse Stakeholder groups in the Basin. I am pleased to see that many partner

agencies and individuals have enthusiastically contributed to the design of this Consultation and will help with presentations and facilitation to make our next two days a fruitful discussion on the future of the Basin. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the partner agencies including IWMI, IUCN, M-Power, WWF, World Fish, Wetland Alliance and National NGOs for your tremendous support to this Stakeholder Consultation. We do hope that this Partnership will be maintained and strengthened throughout the Basin Development Planning process and in future works of the MRC.

On behalf of the MRC Joint Committee, I would also like to thank the Development partners, specifically the Governments of Australia, Denmark, Japan and Sweden, who have been providing tremendous support to our Basin Development Planning process. The Government of Switzerland and other Donors also supported Phase 1 of the Programme. Your continued support, both in terms of financial resources and policy advice, is invaluable to help in this challenging work.

I wish the Stakeholder Consultation a great success and all of you a pleasant stay in Vientiane.

Thank you very much.