

STATEMENT
by
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Excellency Madame Bounkham Vorachit, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Lao PDR, Chairperson of Lao National Mekong Committee, and Chairperson of the MRC Council for 2024,

Ministers, Excellencies, Head of Delegations, Partners representatives,

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Viet Nam National Mekong Committee, it is a great honor for me to join and deliver the remarks at the 2nd ASEAN-MRC Water Security Dialogue. Today's theme, "Sustainable Investment for a Connected, Resilient, and Water-Secure Southeast Asia," highlights the importance of forward-looking solutions to ensure our region's water security through sustainable investment and regional collaboration.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we all know, water security is crucial for our economic development, social well-being, and environment. The Mekong River – a major river system of Southeast Asia, produces important economic values, supports millions of livelihoods, and diverse ecosystems. However, it also faces significant challenges such as environmental degradation, competing water uses, and water-related disasters that extend beyond the Mekong Basin to the broader Southeast Asia region and other countries. Therefore, cross-national cooperation to ensure water security in the region will contribute greatly to the well-being and prosperities of our ASEAN-MEKONG countries.

Climate change is exacerbating these challenges, and causing more frequent and severe extreme weather events. Recently, Typhoon Yagi struck the northern provinces of Viet Nam, triggering devastating landslides and flooding in many provinces, and left over 350 people dead or remained missing and caused an estimated 1.6 billion US dollars in economic losses for our country. The impacts of the super storm have also occurred in many other countries in our region, resulting in widespread suffering and ongoing threats. For Viet Nam, the Typhoon Yagi is the most powerful storm to hit mainland in last 70 years, thus many unpredictable situations faced and unprecedented measures applied in the process of responding to the storm. Viet Nam is also facing more frequent and severe

drought and extended salinity intrusion in the Mekong delta. These more frequent extreme events underscore the urgent need for coordinated efforts and sustainable investments to enhance regional resilience to disasters.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

ASEAN and the Mekong River Commission (MRC) share a common vision for water resource management, as outlined in the 2018 Cooperation Framework of the two organizations. This framework is the foundation of our collaborative efforts, fostering knowledge-sharing and regional coordination. The inaugural Water Security Dialogue in 2021 was a strong beginning, setting the stage for today's discussions.

Building on this progress, the 2nd Dialogue aims to advance the goals of the Vientiane Declaration from the 4th MRC Summit by focusing on sustainable investment opportunities and addressing water-related challenges at regional and river-basin context. This Dialogue also continues to uplift Mekong issues on the ASEAN agenda while facilitating knowledge exchange between Mekong countries and all ASEAN countries and with non - Mekong - ASEAN States and Partners. A secure Mekong is vital for the stability and prosperity of the entire ASEAN region.

In this context, Viet Nam remains committed to working collaboratively with ASEAN and MRC Member States to address shared water challenges. We believe that achieving sustainable water management requires collective efforts, and Viet Nam is eager to both contribute our experience and learn from others. Viet Nam values the opportunity to collaborate in this vital area and is dedicated to advancing our shared goals for a resilient and water-secure Southeast Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As highlighted in the theme of our today Dialogue, Sustainable investment is key to creating a connected, resilient, and water-secure Southeast Asia. To achieve this, we must pursue a multi-faceted approach that includes policy reforms, technological innovation, and active community engagement.

Let me highlight three key areas where sustainable investment can drive progress:

1. **Water security promotion:** our ASEAN-Mekong countries should work together to promote and advocate for the concept and the importance of water security in social well-being, economic development, environment protection and the stability's security in our region. Water security should be looked at all temporal and spatial scales, from long-term, medium-term to short-term and even real time windows; from regional, to national, local and community levels. Guidelines for assessing water security and actions

needed for achieving water security at different levels and scales should be developed. The applications of advanced technologies, no-regret measures and nature-based solutions should be paid attention in water resources management.

2. **Disaster management:** Building upon the signing of the Memorandum of Intent (MOI) between the MRC and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre) in May this year, the concrete cooperation activities of the two organizations in disaster management should be developed, focusing on disaster monitoring, forecasting, and response. Joint efforts of the two organizations should be put into strengthening emergency preparedness and response; sharing best practices; and building community resilience.
3. **Cooperation:** Investing in joint projects and strengthening governance frameworks at regional context will help us better address water challenges and climate change impacts in our region. Cooperation with other partners outside the region is also very important in this endeavour.

As we embark on this Dialogue, let us reaffirm our commitment to a shared vision of water security for the whole Southeast Asia including the Mekong region. Together, we can address our challenges and build a future of sustainable water management and regional resilience.

Finally, I would like to thank the organization teams of ASEAN – MRC and the government of Lao PDR for your excellent arrangement for this important event.

Thank you, and I look forward to our fruitful discussions and the success of the 2nd ASEAN-MRC Water Security Dialogue today.

Thank you very much for your attention.