

Outcome Report of the Hybrid Seminar on

Mekong – ROK Cooperation

Co-organized by:

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia,
The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia
and
The Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace**

17 November 2021, Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra / Via ZOOM



The banner features the national flag of Cambodia, the flag of the Republic of Korea, and the logo of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CIPC). It also includes portraits of three individuals: a Cambodian official, a Korean official, and a CIPC representative. The text is presented in both Khmer and English.

សិក្ខាសាលាអន្តរជាតិ
ស្តីពី
កិច្ចសហប្រតិបត្តិការមេគង្គ-សាធារណរដ្ឋកូរ៉េ

សហការរៀបចំដោយ
ក្រសួងការបរទេស និងសហប្រតិបត្តិការអន្តរជាតិនៃព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
ស្ថានអគ្គរដ្ឋទូតសាធារណរដ្ឋកូរ៉េប្រចាំព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
វិទ្យាស្ថានខ្មែរ សំរាប់សហប្រតិបត្តិការ និងសន្តិភាព

ថ្ងៃពុធ ៧១៧ 1៦វិច្ឆិកា ឆ្នាំ២០២១ | សវនាការស្ទើរតែលម្អិតតាមរយៈប្រព័ន្ធទំនាក់ទំនង Zoom

Embassy of the Republic of Korea
to the Kingdom of Cambodia

Hybrid Seminar
on
Mekong-ROK Cooperation

Co-organized by
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia
Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the Kingdom of Cambodia
Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace

Wednesday, 17 November 2021 | Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra
Via Zoom

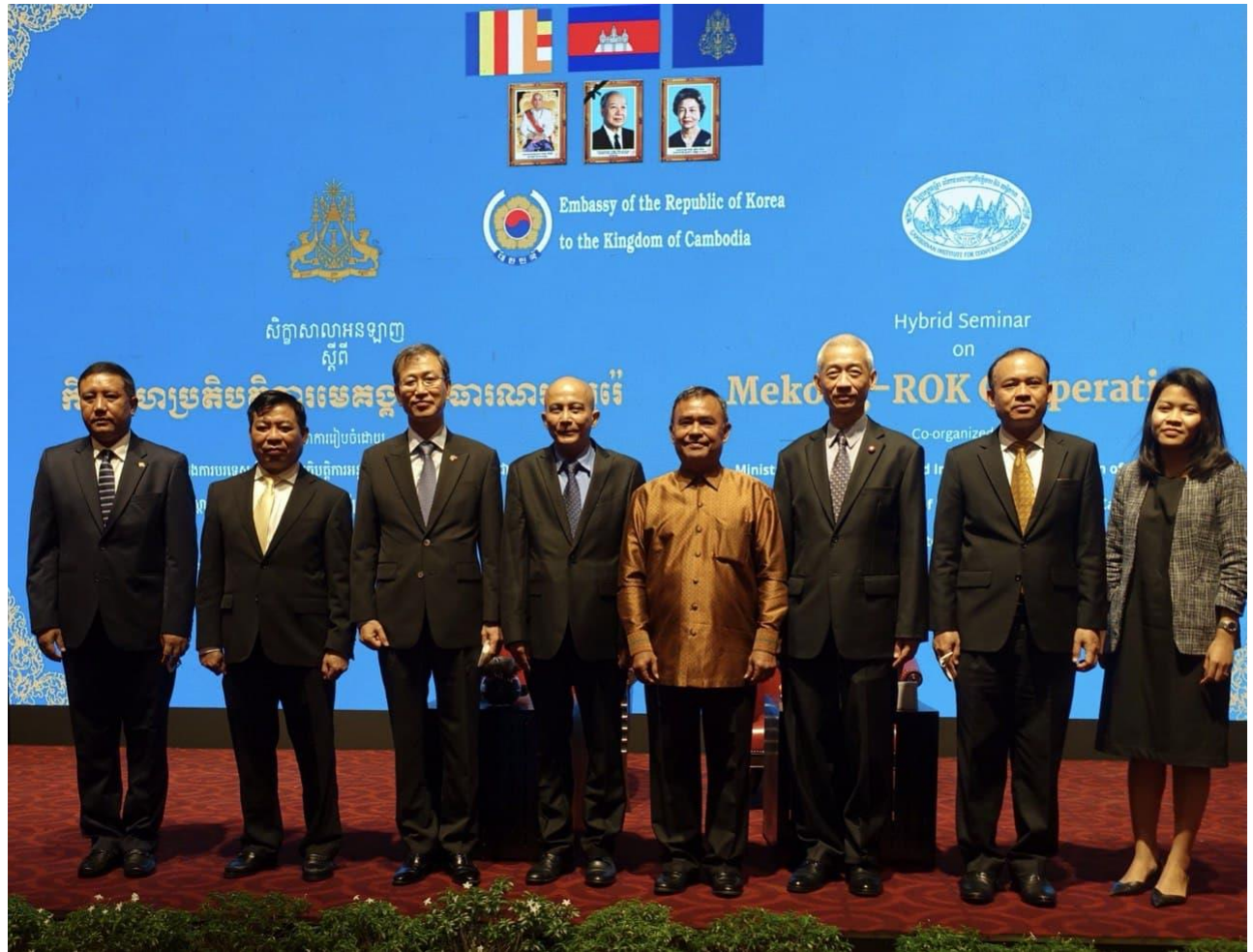


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Hybrid Seminar on Mekong-ROK Cooperation

Co-organized by:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia,
The Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia, and
The Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace

17 November 2021, 10:00-12:00 (Cambodia Time)
Sofitel Phnom Penh Phokeethra / Via ZOOM

Synopsis:

The New Southern Policy was promulgated in 2017 to create “a partnership for people, prosperity and peace” between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and ASEAN in order to strengthen cooperation with Mekong countries to help narrow the development gap and enhance connectivity in the ASEAN region.

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of Mekong-ROK cooperation, which has continued to grow over the past ten years from the inaugural Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in 2011, to the elevation to the summit level in 2019, and to the Strategic Partnership in 2020. As our 6 countries have named this year and 2022 “the Mekong-ROK Exchange Year”, this Seminar will provide a timely and valuable opportunity to take stock of past Mekong-ROK cooperation and discuss the direction of future cooperation.

Agenda:

<u>Opening Session</u>	
9: 30 AM	Arrival of in-person participants and honorable guests to the Seminar All panelists and participants log on to Zoom for audio/ video check
9:55 AM	Ms. Pich Charadine, Deputy Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace and served as Master of Ceremony of the Seminar, Welcome all attendees, provides a brief overview of logistical expectations for the event and explain the Q&A Session, and then turns to opening remarks
10: 00 AM – 10:10 AM	Opening Remarks by H.E. Pou Sothirak, Executive Director CICP
10: 10 AM – 10: 15 AM	Welcoming Remarks by H.E. Park Heung-kyeong, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia
10: 15 AM – 10: 20 AM	Keynote Address by H.E. Sokhem Pech, Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

<u>Session 1: Assessment of current Mekong – ROK cooperation and the Way Forward</u>	
10: 20 AM – 10: 35 AM	Introduction of Ongoing Projects of Mekong – ROK Cooperation by Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director of Mekong Institute
10: 35 AM – 10: 45 AM	Case Presentation: Introduction of KMCRC and Mekong Water Management Project by Dr. Park Jin-hyeog, Director of the Korea – Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center
10: 45 AM – 11: 05 AM	Presentation by Ambassadors of Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam
10: 45 AM – 10: 50 AM	H.E. Panyarak Poolthup, Ambassador of Thailand to Cambodia
10: 50 AM – 10: 55 AM	H.E. Amphay Kindavong, Ambassador of Laos to Cambodia
10: 55 AM – 11: 00 AM	H.E. U Thit Linn Ohn, Ambassador of Myanmar to Cambodia
11: 00 AM – 11: 05 AM	H.E. Nguyen Huy Tang, Ambassador of Vietnam to Cambodia
<u>Session 2: Korea’s Role for the Development of the Mekong Region</u>	
11: 05 AM – 11: 35 AM	Panel Discussion by Regional Specialists
11: 05 AM – 11: 15 AM	Dr. Choe Wongi, Professor in the Department of Asian and Pacific Studies, and Head of Center for ASEAN – India Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy
11: 15 AM – 11: 25 AM	Dr. An Pich Hatda, Chief Executive Officer, Mekong River Commission
11: 25 AM – 11: 35 AM	Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn, Veteran Journalist and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS – Thailand)
11: 35 AM – 11: 55 AM	Q & A Session
Note: Session, the Presentation by the 4 Ambassadors and the Panel Discussion, including the Q & A Session will be moderated by Ms. Pich Charadine, Deputy Executive Director of CICP	
11: 55 AM – 12: 00 PM	Closing remarks by H.E. Pou Sothirak, Executive Director of CICP
12: 00 PM – 13: 30 PM	Luncheon

Announcement

Hybrid Seminar
Mekong-ROK Cooperation
Wednesday, 17 November 2021 | 10:00 - 12:00 | Cambodia Time

  Embassy of the Republic of Korea to the Kingdom of Cambodia 

Opening Session

-  **H.E. Amb. Pou Sothirak**
Executive Director
CICP
-  **H.E. Amb. Park Heung-kyeong**
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia
-  **H.E. Dr. Pech Sokhem**
Advisor
MFAIC Cambodia

Session 1: Assessment of current Mekong-ROK cooperation and the Way Forward

Expert Presentations

-  **Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn**
Executive Director
Mekong Institute
-  **Dr. Park Jin Hyeog**
Director of the Korea-Mekong
Water Resources Management
Collaborative Research Center

Mekong Ambassadors' Presentations

-  **H.E. Amb. Panyarak Poolthup**
Ambassador of Thailand to Cambodia
-  **H.E. Amb. Amphay Kindavong**
Ambassador of Laos to Cambodia
-  **H.E. Amb. U Thit Linn Ohn**
Ambassador of Myanmar to Cambodia
-  **H.E. Amb. Nguyen Huy Tang**
Ambassador of Vietnam to Cambodia

Session 2: Korea's Role for the Development of the Mekong Region

Panel Discussion

-  **Dr. Wongi Choe**
Professor, Department of Asian and
Pacific Studies & Head of Center for
ASEAN-India Studies, Korea National
Diplomatic Academy
-  **Dr. An Pich Hatda**
CEO
Mekong River Commission
-  **Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn**
Veteran Journalist & Senior Research
Fellow, Institute of Security and
International Studies (ISIS - Thailand)

Event Moderator

-  **Ms. Pich Charadine**
Deputy Executive Director
CICP

   Zoom Registration:
<https://bit.ly/MekongROK>  cicp01@online.com
raksmeym2@gmail.com
+855 92 631 727

Role Players

Country	Name	Designation and Affiliation
Cambodia	H.E. Dr. Pech Sokhem	Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia
	H.E. Amb. Pou Sothirak	Executive Director, CICP
	Dr. An Pich Hatda	Chief Executive Officer, Mekong River Commission
	Ms. Pich Charadine	Deputy Director, CICP
Laos	H.E. Amphay Kindavong	Ambassador of Laos to Cambodia
Myanmar	H.E. U Thit Linn Ohn	Ambassador of Myanmar to Cambodia
ROK	H.E. Park Heung-kyeong	Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia
	Dr. Wongi Choe	Professor, Department of Asian and Pacific Studies & Head of Center for ASEAN – India Studies, Korea National Diplomatic Academy
	Dr. Park Jin-hyeog	Director, Korea – Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center
Thailand	H.E. Panyarak Poolthup	Ambassador of Thailand to Cambodia
	Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn	Executive Director, Mekong Institute
	Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn	Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP Senior Fellow, ISIS Thailand Columnist & Veteran Journalist on Regional Affairs
Vietnam	H.E. Nguyen Huy Tang	Ambassador of Vietnam to Cambodia

Biographies of the Role Players



H.E. Amb. Pou Sothirak
Executive Director, CICP

Amb. Pou Sothirak has been CICP Executive Director since 2013. He also serves as Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia.

He was appointed as Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia from September 2013 to January 2014. He was a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore from January 2009 to December 2012. He also served as Cambodian Ambassador to Japan from April 2005 to November 2008. He was elected Cambodian Member of Parliaments twice during the national general election in 1993 and 2003. He was appointed as Minister of Industry Mines and Energy of the Royal Government of Cambodia from 1993 to 1998. He has written extensively on various issues concerning the development of Cambodia and the region.



H.E. Park Heung-kyeong
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME : Park Heung-kyeong
DATE OF BIRTH : Aug. 30, 1962
EDUCATION :
Feb. 1984 B.A. in Political Science and International Relations, Sogang University, Seoul, Korea
May 1993 M.A. in Political Science, State University of New York at Stony Brook N.Y., U.S.A.
Feb. 2019 Ph.D. in Policy Studies, Sejong University, Seoul, Korea

CAREER :
Apr. 1989 Passed High Diplomatic Service Examination
May 1989 Joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
Jun. 1995 Second Secretary, Korean Embassy in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Dec. 1997 First Secretary, Korean Embassy in Libya
Dec. 2002 First Secretary, Korean Embassy in the Commonwealth of Australia
Jun. 2005 Director, Environment Cooperation Division, International Economic Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT)
Feb. 2007 Secondment to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok, Thailand
Feb. 2009 Secondment to the Secretariat of Green Growth Commission
Apr. 2010 Director, Energy, Climate Change and Environment Division, International Economic Affairs Bureau, MOFAT
Aug. 2012 Minister, Korean Embassy in the State of Israel
Mar. 2015 Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the State of Qatar
Sep. 2018 Government Representative for Arctic Affairs
Oct. 2019 Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Cambodia

AWARDS :
Feb. 2013 Service Merit Medal

FAMILY : Married with two sons



H.E. Dr. Pech Sokhem

Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia

I. SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE

A specialist in international law and public policy, sustainable and inclusive development of the natural resources, climate change, strategic planning, communication and knowledge management. Dr Pech has been associated with these fields for more than 30 years with the national government, international organizations, NGOs, universities, research institutes and Private Sector (as advisor, team leader, manager, director, and CEO).

EDUCATION

2012 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), "Optimizing Science-Policy-Practice Interface for Informed Water Policy in Transboundary Mekong River Basin", Graduate School of Environmental Studies (GSES), Tohoku University, Japan.

1995 Master of Law (LLM), Water Law and Sustainable Development Principles, Graduate Faculty, University of Calgary, Canada

1991 Master of Arts (with Honours), International Public Law and Diplomacy, Faculty of International Law, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Former Soviet Union.

CAREER SUMMARY

- **2020-Present:** Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC)
- **2021-Present:** Member of the Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC)
- **2020-2021:** Executive Director, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), Cambodia.
- **2007-2020:** Managing director, Climate System Consultancy and Research Ltd. Canada.
- **2017-2019:** Senior Strategic Advisor, Cambodian Agricultural Value Chain Program, Australian DFAT, Cambodia.
- **2004 to 2007:** Senior Policy Researcher, Japan Science and Technology Agency, CREST Project, Yamanashi, Japan.
- **2001 to 2004:** Director of Technical Support Division (TSD), Deputy CEO (2002 to 2003), Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS).
- **2000 to 2001:** Senior Program Officer/Legal Advisor, Office of Chief Executive Officer, MRCS.
- **1997 to 2000:** Director, Cabinet of Minister and Senior Legal Advisor; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFA&IC), Cambodia.
- **1995 to 1997:** Deputy Director, Legal and Consular Department, MFA&IC, Cambodia.
- **1993 to 1995:** Asian Development Bank and Supreme National Council's Scholarship for master of law (LLM) program in Canada.
- **1991 to 1993:** Officer of the International Organizations Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- **1985 to 1991:** Master Program in MGIMO, Moscow, former Soviet Union.
- **1981 to 1985:** Soviet Union and Eastern Europe Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- **2004 – Present:** Member of the Commission on Environmental Law, IUCN.
- **2005– Present:** Member of the International Water Resources Association (member of IW editorial board).



H.E. Panyarak Poolthup
Ambassador of Thailand to Cambodia

Curriculum Vitae
Mr. Panyarak Poolthup

Birth : 29 January 1962 in Bangkok

Marital Status : Single

Education : B.A. (International Relations),
Thammasat University, Bangkok (1984)
M.A. (International Affairs),
The American University, Washington, DC (1986)

Working Experience :

1987	Joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand
1988	Third Secretary, Department of Information
1989	Second Secretary, Department of Political Affairs
1991	Royal Thai Embassy, Washington, DC
1995	First Secretary, Department of East Asian Affairs
1997	Counsellor, Office of Permanent Secretary
2001	Minister Counsellor, Royal Thai Embassy, Tokyo
2005	Director, Institute of Foreign Affairs
2006	Deputy Director General, Department of South Asian, Middle East and African Affairs
2011	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the State of Qatar
2014	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
2015	Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs
2018 – present	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Cambodia

Other Fields of Interest : Gardening, Music, Science Fiction, Philatelic

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**H.E. Amphay Kindavong**  
Ambassador of Laos to Cambodia

### **Education & Qualification**

- 1982 - 1988 : BA and MA Degree (International Relations), Russia
- 1989 : Japanese Language Study in Japan.
- 2011 : Higher Diploma (Public Administration) In Laos
- 2013 : Attend Security Studies, In Asia – Pacific Center for Security Studies, Hawaii, USA.

### **Work Experience**

- 1989 : Official, Department No 2, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 1990 - 1994 : Third Secretary, Embassy of Laos in Tokyo, Japan
- 1994 - 2000 : Deputy Director, North Asia Division, Asia – Pacific and Africa Department
- 2000 - 2005 : First Secretary and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Laos in Seoul, the Republic of Korea
- 2005 - 2007 : Director, Lao – Thai Cooperation Division, Asia – Pacific and Africa Department
- 2007 - 2009 : Director, South East Asia Division, Asia – Pacific and Africa Department
- 2009 - 2011 : Counsellor and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Laos in Kuwait
- 2011 - 2014 : Deputy Director General, Asia - Pacific and Africa Department
- 2014 - 4/ 2018 : Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Lao PDR to Brunei Darussalam
- 9/2018 - : Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Lao PDR to the Kingdom of Cambodia

### **Acknowledgements**

- A: Orders of Labor (3<sup>rd</sup> class) 2 times, signed by President of the Lao PDR
- B: Medal of Labor, signed by the President of the Lao PDR





**H.E. U Thit Linn Ohn**  
Ambassador of Myanmar to Cambodia

Date of Birth : 18 May 1962

Place of Birth: Meikhtila, Myanmar

Education : B.Sc ( D.S.A) 1980, M.A (Defence Studies) National Defence College (2009)

Thit Linn Ohn was appointed as Ambassador of Myanmar to the Kingdom of Cambodia on July 5 , 2019. Before arrival to Phnom Penh on August 10, 2019, Ambassador Thit Linn Ohn served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the People’s Republic of China, and a non-resident Ambassador to the Mongolia and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea from May2014 to August 2019

Before he was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Myanmar, Mr. Thit Linn Ohn held multiple ranks in the Myanmar military role. Most recently, he was Brigadier General Commandant of the Defense Services Medical Academy from 2012 to 2014. He also served as Brigadier General ( Division Commander) at No.(11) Light Infantry Division from 2010 to 2012. Since joining the Myanmar Armed Forces in 1980, he has also completed various posts of Military assignments in Myanmar till January 2014. He attended at Nanjing Army Command College of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in 2001. He and his wife May San Thein have a son and a daughter.



**H.E. Nguyen Huy Tang**  
Ambassador of Vietnam to Cambodia

CURRICULUM VITAE

**H.E. Mr. Nguyen Huy Tang**

**Executive Vice Chairman of the Central Commission for External Relations  
appointing Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipentiary of the Socialist  
Republic of Viet Nam to the Kingdom of Cambodia**

|                                    |                                                                       |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full name:                         | <b>Nguyen Huy Tang</b>                                                |
| Date of birth:                     | August 10 <sup>th</sup> , 1962                                        |
| Place of origin:                   | Phu Hoa commune, Luong Tai district, Bac Ninh province                |
| Date of Party admission:           | July 24 <sup>th</sup> , 1984                                          |
| Date of official Party membership: | January 24 <sup>th</sup> , 1986                                       |
| Education:                         | Bachelor degree in Laws                                               |
| Language(s):                       | Khmer (equivalent to the D level),<br>English (equivalent to C level) |

**Work experience:**

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1980-1987       | Interpreter, Headquarters Office of the Viet Nam delegation of advisors to Cambodia;                                                                                                       |
| 1987-2000       | Official, Department of Laos and Cambodia and Department of Personnel and Organization, Commission for External Relations of the Communist Party of Viet Nam's Central Committee (CPV CC); |
| 2000-2003       | First Secretary, Embassy of Viet Nam in Cambodia;                                                                                                                                          |
| 2004-2007       | Deputy Director-General (trainee), then Deputy Director-General of the Department of Personnel and Organization, CPV CC's Commission for External Relations;                               |
| 2008-2009       | Acting Director-General, Director-General of the Department of Personnel and Organization, CPV CC's Commission for External Relations;                                                     |
| 2009-2011       | Chief of Administration, Commission for External Relations;                                                                                                                                |
| 2011-2018       | Vice Chairman, CPV CC's Commission for External Relations;                                                                                                                                 |
| 10/2018-present | Executive Vice Chairman, CPV CC's Commission for External Relations                                                                                                                        |

*June 30th, 2021*



**Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn**  
Executive Director, Mekong Institute

As Mekong Institute's Executive Director beginning on September 1, 2020, Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn steers the strategic planning and implementation of the intergovernmental organization's human resource development, capacity strengthening, and research efforts to spur the acceleration of sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS).

Recognized as a respected development leader and regional integration advocate, Mr. Suriyan holds over 15 years of experience in delivering innovative approaches and sustainable practices across his specialized areas of agriculture and rural development, public-private partnership, and trade facilitation in the GMS and Southeast Asia.

Before taking the helm at MI, Mr. Suriyan was the Deputy Cluster Coordinator for Food and Agriculture of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in Thailand and Spokesperson of the Agriculture Working Group under the GIZ Sector Network for Natural Resources and Rural Development in Asia and the Pacific.

As Deputy Cluster Coordinator, Mr. Suriyan spearheaded project steering and management, as well as partnership development in the food and agriculture sectors across the GMS. He, as the Regional Project Director of the Better Rice Initiative Asia from 2014 to 2017, also ushered several rice-related initiatives, which continue to be adapted and implemented by major rice-producing countries across Southeast Asia today.

In addition, Mr. Suriyan carries an extensive international development network, having assumed key positions at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat in Indonesia, and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center. He remains one of the most sought-after and prolific speakers for his macro- and micro-level perspectives on agricultural development in high-level knowledge exchange and dialogue-sharing platforms organized by international and regional organizations such as ADB, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, ASEAN, FAO, the Greater Mekong Subregional Economic Cooperation, and the Sustainable Rice Platform. Mr. Suriyan has also contributed to numerous research and policy studies, including being the lead author of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security Framework.

Mr. Suriyan is a Thai national and graduate of Faculty of Fisheries at Kasetsart University, Thailand. He completed his master's degree program on Management of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (MAKS) at the Wageningen Agricultural University, the Netherlands.



**Dr. Park Jin-hyeog**

Director, Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 10th Oct, 1969

**EDUCATION:**

2003            Kyoto University, Japan, Ph.D. in Water resources engineering

**CAREER:**

2009            Principal researcher, K-water Institute

2015            Head researcher, K-water Institute

2019            Section director, National Climate change adaptation for water resources

Present        Deliberation council members, K-water design evaluation committee

Present        Executive director, Korea Water Resources Association/Chairperson,  
Mekong Special Committee

Present        Director, Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative  
Research Center





**Dr. Wongi Choe**

Professor, Department of Asian and Pacific Studies &  
Head of Center for ASEAN–India Studies, Korea National Diplomatic Academy

Wongi Choe is a Professor and Head of Center for ASEAN–India Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA). He holds B.A. and M.A. in International Relations from Seoul National University in Korea and Ph.D. in Political Science from University of Washington at Seattle in the United States.

At KNDA he has been conducting policy-oriented research on such topics as Korea’s FTA policy, regional integration and regional architecture building in East Asia, G20 and global governance, and Korea’s approach toward UN climate change negotiation, etc.

He was an advisory member of ROK government delegation at the UNFCCC meetings and participated in the multilateral climate change negotiations from 2010 to 2019. He is currently a member of advisory group at the Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy in Korea.

As head of Center for ASEAN–India Studies at KNDA, he engages in policy research on such topics as New Southern Policy, which is Korea’s new foreign policy initiative toward Southeast Asia and beyond, regional cooperation and integration in East Asia, and geo-political dynamics and regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific.

His recent writings include “Why South Korea Wants to Tie in with ASEAN (2019),” “New Southern Policy and US Indo-Pacific Strategy: Directions for US-ROK Cooperation (2019),” “Recent Developments in Indian Foreign Policy and Implications for Korea (2019),” and “Korea’s New Southern Policy: Achievements and Challenges (2019),” etc.



**Dr. An Pich Hatda**

Chief Executive Officer, Mekong River Commission

Dr. An Pich Hatda is currently Chief Executive Officer of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat, having been in the role since January 2019. As the second riparian CEO, Dr. Hatda, a Cambodian national, is leading the organization in expediting the implementation and the completion of the current strategic plan 2016-2020, taking charge of the development of the basin development strategy and strategic plan for the next period, and steering the reinvigoration of the MRC's data, modelling and information systems. He was former Director of the Planning Division and Operations Manager of the Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre of the MRCS for almost 10 years. He also served as the Cambodia National Mekong Committee Secretariat as Deputy Secretary General and Alternate Member of the MRC Joint Committee for several years.



**Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn**  
Visiting Senior Fellow, CICP  
Senior Fellow, ISIS Thailand  
Columnist & Veteran Journalist on Regional Affairs

Kavi Chongkittavorn is a visiting senior fellow, CICP and a senior fellow at Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS) Thailand. He has been a journalist for more than three decades covering Thai and regional politics. He began his career as a reporter in 1983 and became the paper's foreign news editor in 1986. Then, he was asked to explore Indochina—first as Bureau Chief in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (1988-1990) and later on in Hanoi, Vietnam (1990-1992). After a year in Oxford University as Reuter Fellow in 1994, he went to Jakarta and served as Special Assistant to the Secretary General of ASEAN in Jakarta in 1995 before returning to journalism. He was named the Human Rights Journalist of 1998 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by Amnesty International. From 1999-2000, he was the President of Thai Journalists Association. From 2000-2001, he went to Harvard University as Nieman Fellow. He served as a member of jury and from 2005-2008 as its chair of Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize organized by UNESCO.



**Ms. Pich Charadine**  
Deputy Director, CICP

PICH Charadine is currently the Deputy Executive Director the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) in charge of Research, Training and Publication and serving as the Coordinator of the Global Center for Mekong Studies (GCMS-Cambodia Center, a Track II think tank network of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation).

Ms. Pich obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and International Relations with High Honors from Zaman University (Cambodia) and holds a Master of Arts in Dialogue Studies (concentrated on political dialogue) with Merit from Keele University (United Kingdom). She was nominated to the 2019 US Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on ASEAN-Nations of the South China Sea – Sovereignty and Rules-based Order. She was also the Visiting Fellow at the China Institute for International Studies (CIIS) in 2018 and Visiting Scholar at China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU) in 2019.

She has written and published on various issues concerning Cambodia's political development and its subsequent foreign policy implications. Her focus is on Sino-Cambodia relations (particularly political economy dilemma, foreign aid policy, and economic statecraft), ASEAN Regional Framework and ASEAN-China Partnership, Cambodia's politics and foreign relations, and Mekong sub-regional cooperation, especially on Mekong-Lancang Cooperation.

## **Executive Summary and Recommendations**

Bringing together representatives of the diplomatic community, civil society, and academia in Cambodia, the Republic of Korea, and the Mekong region as a whole – the Seminar on Mekong-ROK Cooperation was held at the Sofitel Hotel in Phnom Penh on 17 November 2021. While exploring the past, present, and future of the ROK’s role in the Greater Mekong Subregion, the event also served to commemorate ten years since the Mekong-Han Declaration and Seoul’s expanding and vital role in engaging with the diverse challenges that confront the river in particular as well as the subregion in general.

In addition to the keynote speaker from the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, four Mekong state ambassadors in Phnom Penh (Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) each raised key issues for future cooperation between the ROK and the subregion – notably: post-Covid economic recovery; the importance of continued ROK support for education and technology transfer; the need to deepen supply chain integration between the subregion and Korea; and the continued importance of strengthening economic ties. The essential role that the ROK has played in the region’s development was consistently highlighted by all. In subsequent sessions, there were several key takeaways.

First, the commitment of the ROK to the region under the New Southern Policy was underlined with exceptional detail – clarifying the main priority areas where Seoul can add the most value to the region and support the resolution of long-standing impediments to development and sustainability. The focus on agricultural, environmental, ICT, and infrastructure and overview of some of the 33 projects completed, ongoing, or planned for the subregion provided a concrete illustration of that commitment.

Second, the role of the Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center and its future in the region was presented. The topics of water data utilization, the development of cooperation agendas for the use of Korean water resources management technology, and a roadmap for joint research and the development of future collaboration were set out – an ambitious and important agenda that will significantly increase Korea’s footprint on water-related questions in the subregion.

Third, it is important for the ROK that the Mekong states achieve strong and robust economic growth in order to maintain “strategic autonomy from any external interventions.” Concomitantly, the importance of the strategic stability of the region was underlined and the importance of avoiding the disruption thereof stemming from geopolitical shifts and/or the continuing US-China rivalry. At the same time, the ROK was noted as able to play an inherently positive role in the region serving as a trusted partner in light of its middle power status and its potential to serve as an “honest broker” in the development of a potential code of conduct/set of governance principles from the river and to further the development of collaboration and coordination between the diverse states and institutions in the subregion.

Finally, in terms of recommendations and next steps – overall, the event saw a strong level of consensus that the ROK’s gradual entry into the region over the last decade has been a success, with a strong record of project achievements as well as a strong level of trust from local actors. At the same time, areas for future/further development and focus include:

- The aforementioned potential role for the ROK in facilitating a strengthened governance framework for the river.
- Increased support for educational, capacity-building, and technology transfer activities.
- The importance of deepening and diversifying supply chain relationships
- The need for increased Korean investment to diversify the region’s sources of FDI in order to resolve continuing “development gap” issues.
- The relative lack of awareness of Mekong issues in Korea and the possibility of institutionalizing relations between the media/journalism sectors in the ROK and the subregion in order to mitigate that challenge.
- The centrality that economic recovery from the Covid pandemic will play in terms of setting the near term agenda.

## Summary of the Proceedings



The opening remarks began with Amb. Pou Sothirak stressing the importance of ROK – Mekong cooperation to mitigate the impacts of the current COVID-19 pandemic; to narrow development gaps; to enhance connectivity in the ASEAN region, and to facilitate ASEAN regional integration. The annual inter-governmental meetings – which includes senior officials meeting, foreign ministerial meetings, and summit meetings as well as public private cooperation (including

the annual Mekong Cooperation Business Forum and projects funded by the Mekong – ROK Cooperation Fund) demonstrates the ROK’s strong determination to deepen its commitment and role in the Greater Mekong Subregion. Although there has been strong progress in economic, investment, and people – to – people exchange, challenges continue to exist in areas such as water resource management, conflicts of interest between/among the Mekong countries, and external power influence in the Mekong River. Various experts have observed that external powers’ competition in the Mekong which must be taken into serious and common consideration to prevent conflict in the region. Each of the 13 institutions focused on the subregion operate in an uncoordinated way and cooperation remains low. Information sharing should become institutionalized among the Mekong Subregion institutions such that all the members are ready to respond to any issues that might emerge. The research and findings related to the transboundary issues in the Mekong River should be shared among all the actors in order to develop constructive responses and to find ways to move forward in the region. This will serve to build trust and strengthen the willingness of the actors in the Mekong River to work together more closely over time.



H.E. Park Heung-kyeong, the Ambassador of the ROK to Cambodia, stressed the importance of cooperation between the ROK and the Mekong countries. The promotion of an inclusive approach in the region with a focus on long – term challenges, such as climate change, sustainable development, and human resource development, will help to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of the 240 million people in the Mekong region. Moreover, Ambassador Park also pointed out that

the ROK seeks to strengthen and to further promote “needs-based cooperation” in the Mekong region through South Korea’s major contribution channel, i.e., the Mekong – ROK Cooperation Fund. Moreover, Ambassador Park also emphasized achievements resulting from the Mekong – ROK Cooperation such as support for sustainable development, the promotion of eco-tourism, etc.



Enhanced cooperation between the ROK and the Mekong countries was also endorsed by H.E Sokhem Pech, Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in his keynote address. H.E. Sokhem pointed out a range of achievements and progress that the Mekong countries and the Republic of Korea have achieved over the past 10 years and emphasized the steady increase in investment, trade, and finance, as well as strengthened collaboratives efforts

that are key for the development of the Mekong Subregion. Moreover, H.E Sokhem also gave his insights on the New Southern Policy Plus: a reflection of the keen determination from the ROK to deepen cooperation while addressing the challenges that Ambassador Pou has mentioned, specifically the need to focus on vulnerable groups.



The first session focused on the “**Assessment of Current Mekong – ROK cooperation and the Way Forward,**” beginning with an introduction of the ongoing projects of Mekong – ROK cooperation which was presented by Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, the Executive Director of Mekong Institute. The Mekong – Korea Cooperation Fund Operation Cycle provides a systemic framework that the

ROK utilizes to establish and to carry out its projects in the subregion which provide not only a systematic analysis of each step of a project, but also gives both the ROK and the Mekong countries a framework based on the principles of sustainable development and capacity building. Moreover, Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn set out the MKCF projects’ status, with a total of 33 projects in the region: 9 completed, 13 ongoing, and 11 approved by ROK for implementation. Furthermore, he also highlighted various priority areas, e.g., culture and tourism, human resource development, infrastructure, environment, non – traditional security challenges, information and communication technology, and agriculture and rural development, which clarifies the future direction of ROK – Mekong cooperation. Those include contributions to the ongoing COVID-19 response; strengthening results-based implementation and experience sharing; the need for the further broadening of Mekong – ROK cooperation; and a continued emphasis on capacity development.



Turning to the detailed presentation by Dr. Park Jin-hyeog, he explored the diverse water issues in the Mekong Basin in which common issues include changes in rainfall patterns due to climate change and the reduction of sediment due to the construction of upstream dams. The ROK has put tremendous effort to assist in the sustainable development in the Mekong; noting in particular the

Water Data Utilization and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region initiative. Dr. Park set out a detailed series of initiatives that the ROK would be pursuing as Seoul continues to expand its programming in the region; at the same time he highlighted that South Korea as a middle power is



uniquely placed to cooperate with the Mekong states as well as to strengthen overall subregional cooperation in the near future.



H.E. Amphay Kindavong

H.E. Amphay Kindavong, Ambassador of Laos to Cambodia who strongly and positively endorses continued cooperation between the Mekong countries and the Republic of Korea to facilitate subregional development in the region over the years to come. The ambassador also expressed appreciation for the strong assistance from the ROK to the Mekong countries, especially to Laos, in diverse aspects of socio-economic development. At the same time, he noted that it is vital to remain vigilant as

major issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the post-COVID-19 economic recovery continue to require support and cooperation from the ROK.



H.E. U Thit Linn Onh

This positive evaluation of the ROK's work in the subregion was further underscored by H.E. U Thit Linn Onh, Ambassador of Myanmar to Cambodia, who stressed the need to upgrade cooperation in the Mekong – ROK to the strategic partnership. The ambassador focused on four main areas: (i) the need for attention to regional health security and the prevention of emerging diseases similar to the COVID-19; (ii) the need to develop a healthy and supportive economic area; (iii) the enhancement of cooperation in the areas of education and technical training; and (iv) the continuation of investment and cooperation in the region.



H.E. Panyarak Poolthub

H.E. Panyarak Poolthub, Ambassador of Thailand to Cambodia, further underlined the need for the Mekong countries, with the cooperation from the ROK, to build back from the effects of COVID-19 that has severely damaged every aspect of development in the Mekong. He highlighted the importance of adequate vaccine distribution; technological and experience sharing; and the need for sustainable growth in order to narrow gaps in

society and foster development in the post-Covid 19 period.



H.E. Nguyen Huy Tang

The fight against the COVID-19 was also a major point in the remarks of H.E. Nguyen Huy Tang’s presentation. The Ambassador of Vietnam to Cambodia focused on the need to prioritize the control of COVID-19 and other related disease along with water resource management and efficient water usage in the Mekong Subregion. The Ambassador pointed to ten priority areas where Mekong – ROK cooperation can have significant, positive impacts:

- (i) equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution and the importance of experience and technology sharing;
- (ii) the acceleration of the development of vaccine passports to facilitate reopening and promote tourism;
- (iii) the need for close coordination of trade flows and the minimization of supply chain disruptions;
- (iv) the promotion of technological transformation and information transfers;
- (v) the improvement of capacity and climate adaption;
- (vi) the enhancement of education, training, and human resource development;
- (vii) the need to strengthen public-private cooperation;
- (viii) facilitation of the diversification of supply chains;
- (ix) the enhancement of connectivity between the ROK and the Mekong states in 2022;
- and (x) support for Cambodia as ASEAN Chair in 2022.



Dr. Wongi Choe

The second session focused on “**Korea’s Role for the Development of the Mekong Region.**” Due to time constraints, each speaker developed several main points. Dr. Choe Wongi professor in the Department of Asian and Pacific Studies and the Head of Center for ASEAN – India Studies at the KNDA, focused on three elements that can enhance the Mekong – ROK cooperation. The first

element stressed was the need for the Mekong countries to maintain and to enhance their development capability, e.g., human resources. Second, the need for the deepening of cooperation between the subregion and the Republic of Korea including the sharing of experience, technology, and information. Third, the promotion of economic diversification, specifically, the expansion of trade cooperation between the ROK and Mekong countries.



Dr. An Pich Hatda

Dr. An Pich Hatda, the Chief Executive Officer of the Mekong River Commission highlighted the need to strengthen research and development in the area of water resource management and to enhance the capacity of each Mekong state in this area. In this context, the Republic of Korea should take a leading role in the Mekong in order to facilitate strengthened cooperation and to reduce

complications in the overall development process of the Mekong subregion while also promoting and enhancing a genuinely multilateral approach. Finally, Dr. Hatda noted the importance of continued outreach to China in order to incorporate it into existing Mekong governance and collaboration mechanisms.



Lastly, Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn made several recommendations for the development of the Mekong – ROK cooperation. He pointed out the need for the creation of a code of conduct which could serve as a focal point for relations with states outside the subregion. He further underscored the continued salience of the governance of the Mekong and the need for Mekong states to adhere to a

shared position and maintained common strategies when dealing with external actors. Moreover, although the ROK has made a swift and expansive impact in the subregion, there remain relatively few reports in Korea about the Mekong and very few people in Korea know about the development and the status of the Mekong River and Mekong states itself. Thus, ROK – Mekong media cooperation should be strengthened in order to facilitate the dissemination of information and to improve the understanding of the river and the Mekong subregion as a whole. Finally, the Republic of Korea should also focus on helping the Mekong countries with the transfer of technology and strengthening of education, while recognizing the importance on the impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers in both South Korea and in the Mekong countries, a topic that has also received relatively minimal attention.

In his closing remarks, Amb. Pou Sothirak pointed out that the New Southern Policy has elevated ASEAN - including the Mekong countries – to a much more significant place in ROK foreign policy and cooperation. Summing up, he noted that the event had revealed the future outlook of ROK-Mekong subregional relations; key commitments from the government of the Republic of Korea and the Mekong countries; examined what had been implemented so far; and successfully and positive commemorated the anniversary of Mekong – ROK Cooperation.

He further highlighted the vulnerability of smaller states to the influence/hegemony of external powers, specifically the great powers, which can steer/alter the behavior of smaller states, specifically the Mekong states, resulting in difficulties in cooperation. The economic partnership between the ROK and the Mekong region provides significant opportunities for both in light of supply chain development/diversification and the economic complementarities that exist. At the same time, the code of conduct and governance mechanisms in Mekong, mentioned by Mr. Kavi, are likely to continue to be a challenge as China, one of the Mekong countries, would most likely not approve and this would cause further difficulties in the region rather than promoting cooperation.

As noted previously, the hybrid seminar marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mekong – ROK cooperation and can be summarized as one of the means to reflect and move forward with mutual understanding and mutual trust between the ROK and the Lower Mekong states to promote sustainable development, tourism, agriculture and rural development, infrastructure and information and communication technology enhancement, improved environmental protection, and the resolution of non-traditional security threats in the near future.

## **Papers and Remarks**

### ***Opening Remarks***

***H.E. Amb. Pou Sothirak***

***Executive Director, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace***

The Cambodian Institute for Cooperation Peace is honored to co-organize this timely hybrid seminar on Mekong – ROK Cooperation with the esteemed Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Cambodia.

On behalf of the co-organizers, I wish to warmly welcome all the distinguished participants of this Webinar and I am pleased to say a few words about the essence of the Mekong – Korea Cooperation as follows.

The adoption of the “Mekong-Han River Declaration for Establishing Partnership for People, Prosperity and Peace” and the agreements to continue the Mekong-ROK cooperation at the First Mekong-Republic of Korea (ROK) Summit, held in Busan, South Korea, on 27 November 2019, reflect President Moon Jae-in administration's sincere intention to upgrade relations in 2021 with the Mekong nations to that of strategic partners, emphasizing the necessity in cooperation between the countries, especially pertaining to dreadful impact created by COVID-19.

In seeking to strengthen cooperation with Mekong countries, this initiative is considered a well calibrated effort from the part of the Republic of Korea to help CLMVT narrow the development gap and enhance connectivity in the ASEAN region, and in turn, facilitate ASEAN regional integration.

Focusing in the realm of non-traditional security cooperation, the Mekong-ROK cooperation founded on three pillars of people, prosperity and peace that covers seven priority areas: culture and tourism, human resources development, agriculture and rural development, infrastructure, information and communication technology (ICT), environment and other non-traditional security challenges.

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of Mekong-ROK Cooperation, and Cambodia and ROK are this year's Co-Chairs of Mekong-ROK partnership, which gives us an opportune time to review the ongoing Mekong-ROK cooperation and discuss the way forward. I am looking forward very much to hearing all the experts' views and perspectives from the distinguished speakers after my speech.

The Mekong-ROK cooperation represents South Korea's keen determination to deepen its commitment with the five Mekong country members in a variety of ways. These comprise annual inter-governmental meetings which include Senior Officials' Meeting, Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and Summit Meeting, and public-private cooperation including the annual Mekong-ROK Business Forum and the projects funded by Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund.

Before Covid-19 outbreak in late 2019, there have been substantive achievements from the 1st ROK-Mekong Foreign Minister in October 2011 to the 9th ROK-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting in August 2019.

President Moon's announcement of the ROK-Mekong Vision during his visit to Laos in September 2019 where he announced the elevation of the bilateral relations to the level of a "Korea-Mekong partnership for human-centered peace and prosperity" where he pledged to pursue with nations around the Mekong "prosperity based on the sharing of experiences," "sustainable prosperity" and "mutual prosperity and peace in East Asia."

According to the Korea International Trade Association, as of 2019, economic exchange between the ROK to Mekong rise up to around USD 57.3 billion and between the Mekong region to the ROK around USD 27.3 billion in trade volume.

According to the Export-Import Bank and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of the ROK in 2019, investment volume has been recorded at USD 54.6 billion from the ROK to the Mekong region, and USD 300 million from the Mekong region to the ROK.

Whereas people to people exchange in 2019 was recorded to be 6.77 million visitors from the ROK to the Mekong region and 1.34 million from Mekong region to the ROK, according to the tourism authority of each country and the Korea Immigration Service.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Notwithstanding these resounding achievements, there are ongoing challenges regarding water resource management of the mighty Mekong River with conflict of interest between and among the Mekong countries and extra-regional powers where cost and benefit deriving from the exploitation of natural resource of the Mekong River is not equally share in term of rights and responsibility of all riparian communities.

Within a spectrum of an ever increasing number of initiatives and mechanisms where external powers engage Mekong countries, various scholars and analysts have observed serious competition to the existing institutional mechanisms such as the Mekong River Commission (MRC), the Lancang Mekong Cooperation, the Mekong – US Partnership, the Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation (GMS), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) and the Japan – Mekong Cooperation, the South Korea-Mekong Cooperation. These competitions require that there would be appropriate coordination to be taken into serious considerations, otherwise friction among states and conflicts may arise threatening peace and security of this region.

Although these mechanisms may have similarity in terms of infrastructure advancement, human resource development, and poverty reduction, they differ in the modeling of their development policies towards the Mekong sub-region as each of these frameworks work separately with the

Mekong countries in an uncoordinated way. They hardly bring other relevant stakeholders to the table to discuss project design or implementation. They don't share their concerns or jointly address water related transboundary challenges and therefore lacking the spirit of collaboration among external donors restricting their ability to open up for a more inclusive ways and expose any opportunity for the powers to get involved collaboratively in assisting the five Mekong countries to meet their development need in a sustainable and wholistic ways. This tendency tends to spawn distrust and misunderstanding with one another and breed greater animosity among them which make Mekong regional-wide cooperation nearly impossible.

The collaboration process among all the partners to the five Mekong countries should be adequately coordinated and evaluated to accommodate the variation in the design and implementation of projects in accordance with respective mechanisms' strength and agendas. Any Mekong mechanism must inspire a vital institution that could add up what other existing mechanisms are not able to achieve.

Information-sharing should become a routine among the Mekong sub-region mechanisms. In this sense, cooperative information sharing framework should be created to update each member involved about any disastrous incidents, particularly when it involves any potentially divisive incident which might be occurring related to large scale dams building and as such allowing all members to be ready to respond in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation. By this way, each member stands ready for what should be done in time of catastrophe.

Furthermore, when any Mekong initiative or any other institution completes analysis/research on any topics of transboundary issues, findings should be disseminated and shared to all actors. Frank feedback regarding project implementations and sharing lessons learned should be promoted among the different mechanisms intended for better ways to move forward in the Mekong region. This can avoid suspicions between one another as well as build trust and confidence among the powers in the Mekong.

For the Mekong – ROK Cooperation, as the latest comer, to gain more traction and provide more add-on benefits to the existing mechanisms, political will to address concerns I have raised above with the spirit of collaboration and willingness to work with other existing mechanism will set an excellent example for other mechanisms to follow so as to provide greater synergy to the development needs of the five Mekong countries.

Moreover, effective coordination and evaluation mechanisms among all involved must be in place to avoid fragmentation and chase away suspicion and distrust of those powers who have genuine desire to make Greater Mekong Sub-region a region of peace, stability and prosperity.

The ROK – Mekong Cooperation should aspire to play a role model for these recommendations I have mentioned to further institutionalizing the Mekong cooperation mechanisms to be more inclusive and open so as to become a more effective and trustworthy complementary to other the existing Mekong frameworks.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Phnom Penh for supporting this important and timely hybrid seminar.

I shall stop here and look forward to hearing what other eminent guest speakers will have to say on how to move the Mekong – ROK Cooperation forward with stride and vigor.

Thank you very much for your attention



***Welcoming Remarks***  
***H.E. Park Heung-kyeong***  
***Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia***

I would like to welcome you for joining us in the Hybrid Seminar on Mekong-ROK Cooperation. This year marks the 10th Anniversary of Mekong-ROK Cooperation, which our 6 countries have designated as “the Mekong-ROK Exchange Year”.

In this important moment, it is a great honor and pleasure for me to co-host the Seminar on Mekong-ROK Cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace.

As you may well know, Mekong-ROK cooperation has seen remarkable progress in the past ten years, from the inaugural Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in 2011, to the elevation to the summit level in 2019, and to the Strategic Partnership in 2020.

As we celebrate the Mekong-ROK Cooperation’s 10th anniversary, Korea seeks to further advance needs-based cooperation in the region, through our main channel of contribution, namely the “Mekong-ROK Cooperation fund”.

In Session 1 of today’s Seminar, Mr. Suriyan Vichetlekar, Executive Director of Mekong Institute, will provide us with the introduction of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation fund, and give a brief overview of its ongoing projects.

It will be followed by a case presentation of the “Mekong Water Management Project” under the MKCF scheme by Dr. Park Jin-hyeog, Director of the Mekong-ROK Water Management Joint Research Center.

Next, we would like to invite all Mekong Ambassadors who have graciously attended today’s event and to provide their valuable inputs on the way forward for the next ten years of our partnership.

In Session 2, we look forward to hearing ideas from 3 regional specialists on Korea’s role for the development of the Mekong region.

**Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Mekong region has not only accomplished phenomenal economic growth at a faster rate than any other region, at a 7 percent economic growth annually, but is also active in addressing long-term challenges such as climate change, laying the foundation for a sustainable development.



It is insightful that Mekong's development cooperation with Korea is also taking this inclusive approach, leading to accomplishments such as the establishment of the Korea-Mekong Forest Cooperation Center in 2016 for the promotion of eco-tourism, Korea-Mekong Water Management Joint Research Center in 2019 for safeguarding the health and safety of the 240 million people in the Mekong region, and Lee Jong-wook Fellowship to support the training of healthcare professionals in the region, just to name a few.

**Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Korea has undergone rapid economic development in a relatively short period of time. With the economic complementarity and cultural similarities between the Mekong countries and Korea, and with Korea's knowledge and experience gained through a similar history of development, I trust that Mekong-ROK partnership could achieve greater strides in various areas such as tourism and culture, human resources development, agriculture and rural development, infrastructure, environment, information and communication technology, and non-traditional security challenges.

I hope today's Seminar will provide fresh impetus for further development of Mekong-ROK relations and also lay the foundation for a successful Summit in the near future.

Thank you.

***Keynote Address***

***H.E. Dr. Sokhem Pech***

***Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia***

It is indeed my great pleasure to join the Seminar on Mekong-Republic of Korea (ROK) Cooperation with you today to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation. On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, we would like to sincerely thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea and CICP for co-hosting this seminar. I firmly believe that the event will provide us a valuable opportunity to explore effective and innovative ways to strengthen this Strategic Cooperation for sustainable and inclusive development and building our region back better from the current pandemic.

Cambodia, as a co-chair of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation for 2021, has had an honor in working closely and productively with ROK and all member countries to achieve the agreed strategic development goals. Our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E. PRAK Sakhonn, conducted an official visit to ROK, and co-chaired with H.E. CHUNG Eui-yong, Minister for Foreign Affairs of ROK, the 11th Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in early September 2021. It is a vivid evidence of the firm bilateral and multilateral relationship among our countries.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Mekong-ROK Cooperation has achieved historic gains since the “Mekong-Han River Declaration” adopted in 2011, cementing its strategic and integral position in fostering the people-centered and people-oriented development, public-private partnership, human resource development, technology and information exchange, and solution-finding initiatives for deeper cooperation and sustainable and inclusive growth and for peace and prosperity.

The 11th FMM Co-Chairs' Statement well documented the remarkable progress achieved by the Mekong-ROK Cooperation, and reaffirmed the steadfast commitment to enhancing this Strategic Partnership on three key pillars, namely People, Peace, and Prosperity, and the New Southern Policy Plus (NSPP) announced by President Moon Jae-in at the ASEAN-ROK Summit on November 12, 2020.

With gratitude, I wish to stress that during the last 10 years, the Mekong ROK Cooperation has contributed to a remarkable outcome. For example, the 2020 Outlook of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) showed that ROK is ranked among the top investors in the Mekong especially in CLMV countries in manufacturing, finance and infrastructure-related activities, and about 70% of the ROK's FDI to ASEAN directed at CLMV countries. According to the ROK-MOFA in 2020, the trade between ROK and Mekong Countries has increased by 2.5 times, and visitors by 3.3 times.

Other remarkable achievements are in the cultural heritage preservation and restoration, and cultural creative industries, and people-to-people exchanges, sustainable and smart tourism and the Mekong-ROK Exchange Year 2021 (now extended to 2022). We have noticed with appreciation the close collaboration in the sharing of knowledge and experiences, in higher education and TVET, and stronger cooperation in agriculture and rural development, especially in climate-smart agriculture and fisheries to enhance the productivity and resilience of rural communities and rural households against climate change. The ICT cooperation, digital transformation especially in digital economy, governance and cyber security, e-commerce, artificial intelligence and big data for improving preparedness for the Industrial Revolution 4.0, have been improved.

The investment cooperation has been undertaken to promote the regional connectivity, through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, e.g., through the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC); Cambodia-Korea Friendship Bridge; the Inland Waterway Transport project in Lao PDR; and other smart city projects in the Mekong countries – just to mention a few. We sincerely believe that the sustainable and inclusive infrastructure development through facilitating better access to financing for the sustainable infrastructure will be further heightened during and in the post-pandemic era.

The Mekong – ROK cooperation has placed importance on environmental protection and biodiversity conservation, water resources management, forestation, sustainable energy, air pollution, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and disaster risk management and for sustainable development and co-prosperity in the region. We would like to acknowledge the roles and contributions made by the Korea-Mekong Water Resources Collaboration Research Center (KMCRC) and the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF), and the continued collaboration with other Mekong Organizations, programs and research institutes.

We have also witnessed the fruitful outcomes of the Mekong-ROK Business Forum and the Mekong-ROK Business Council for strengthening cooperation among the public and private sector, especially for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate trade, investment and business flows for a resilient recovery, green and clean energy and economy, and supply chain linkages and regional integration. The 8th Mekong-ROK Business Forum was conducted in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, in December 2020 under the theme of “Business in the New Normal: Turning Vulnerability into Resilience” and the 9th Mekong-ROK Business Forum is planned to organize in a hybrid format in December 2021 in Cambodia.

The Republic of Korea and its people have been providing vaccines, and medical supplies and equipment to Mekong countries to combat the COVID-19 outbreak and pledge to contribute 200 million USD in the form of financial and in-kind contributions to COVAX by 2022. We are grateful to their truly caring, sharing and friendship spirit and deeds.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Moving forward, I am confident that the Mekong-ROK Cooperation becomes even more strategically and indispensable in complementing the efforts to narrow the development gap within ASEAN and Mekong region, and steadfastly implementing the Mekong-ROK Plan of Action 2021-2025. It is a solid road-map providing more comprehensive and integrated approaches for the cooperation framework building on the outcomes of the two sets of previous Plans of Action.

The “New Southern Policy” Plus announced in late 2020, reflects timely the needs to respond and adapt to complex emerging situations proactively, as the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has amply highlighted this need for a full solidarity and cooperation. It underscores “people first” in the NSP Plus’s focus on COVID-19 recovery in the “new normal” by investing in key sectors such as education and human resource/skill development, rural and urban infrastructure development, and digital transformation etc.

We would like to reiterate the need for us to continue promoting complementarity and developmental cooperation with other regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks.

Following the recent decline of COVID-19 infection and casualty cases in the country, our Government has announced the step-by-step re-opening of the economic activities and facilitating the entries for foreign business and other travelers with a great care. This is an important step to recover the livelihood, business and economic activities in a new normalcy and to enhance the cooperation between Mekong countries and ROK in the socio-economic recovery and building a better, greener and more resilient future for all. Cambodia is firmly convinced that the Mekong-ROK Cooperation will continue to play an increasingly important role in this regard in the coming years and decades.

Once again, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Your Excellency Park Heung-kyeong, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, and all distinguished participants for your support and cooperation. I wish this seminar a great success and fruitful outcomes for the sake of sustainable and inclusive benefits to our region and our peoples.

Thank you.

*Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund*  
*Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn*  
*Executive Director of Mekong Institute*



01

**MEKONG-ROK PLAN OF ACTION  
2021-2025**

**OUTLINES**

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**MEKONG-KOREA COOPERATION FUND (MKCF)**  
MKCF Operation Cycle  
MKCF Projects Status

03

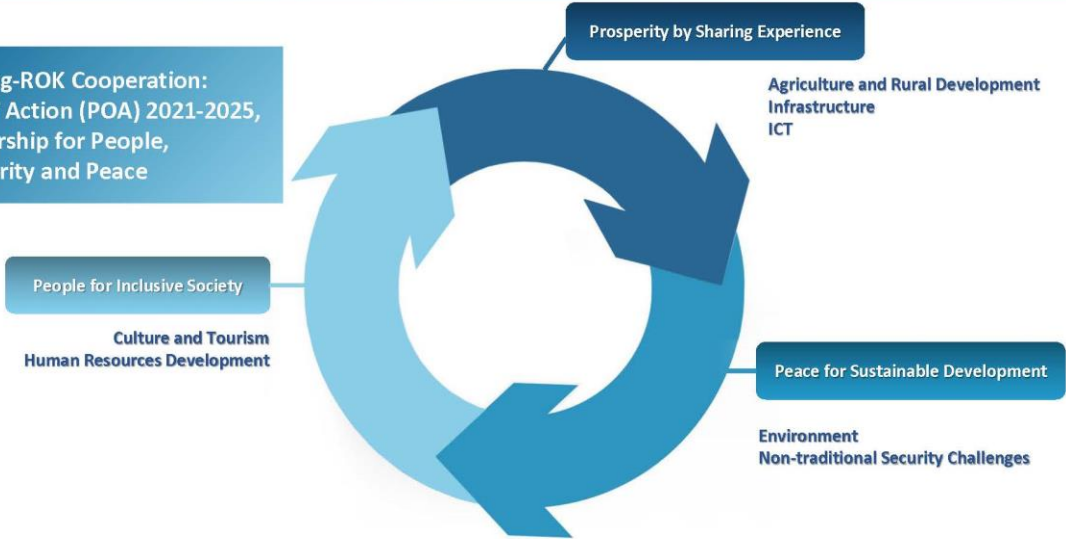
**MKCF FUNDED PROJECTS**

04

**FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

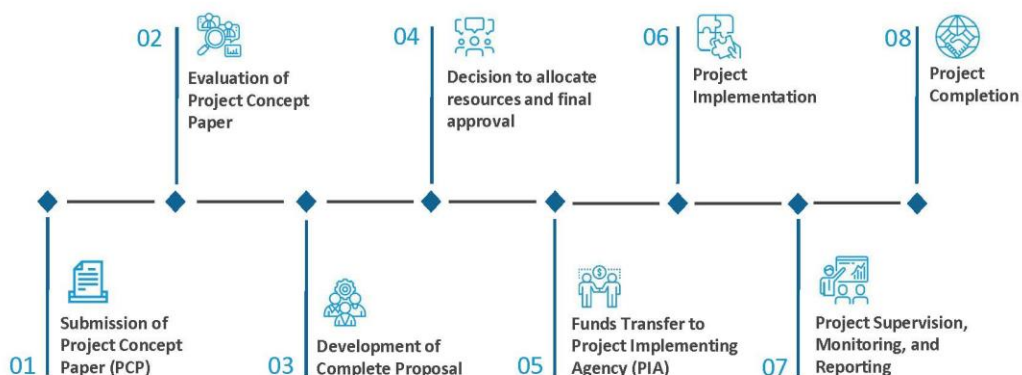


Mekong-ROK Cooperation: Plan of Action (POA) 2021-2025, Partnership for People, Prosperity and Peace





## MKCF OPERATION CYCLE



## MKCF Projects Status



| Country       | Completed | Ongoing   | Approved* | Total     |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Cambodia      | 1         | 2         | 2         | 5         |
| Lao PDR       | 1         | 3         | 1         | 5         |
| Myanmar       | 0         | 3         | 2         | 5         |
| Vietnam       | 2         | 1         | 2         | 5         |
| Thailand      | 2         | 2         | 1         | 5         |
| RoK           | 1         | 1         | 2         | 4         |
| Regional (MI) | 2         | 1         | 1         | 4         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>9</b>  | <b>13</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>33</b> |

\*Approved by ROK for implementation



# 03 | PRIORITY AREAS AND MKCF FUNDED PROJECTS



MEKONG INSTITUTE



The MKCF was established in 2013 to encourage and support cooperation in seven priority areas



## PRIORITY AREA: CULTURE AND TOURISM

**Objectives:** To introduce smart tourism and sharing economy concept based on more innovative and efficient use of endogenous cultural and natural resources and existing human capital

- [www.mekongsustainabletourism.com](http://www.mekongsustainabletourism.com)
- [www.facebook.com/mekongstory](https://www.facebook.com/mekongstory)
- [www.instagram.com/mekong\\_story](https://www.instagram.com/mekong_story)
- [blog.naver.com/mekongstory](https://blog.naver.com/mekongstory)

# 03 | PRIORITY AREA: ENVIRONMENT



MEKONG INSTITUTE



## Guidelines and Certification for Green Buildings in Cambodia

**Objectives:** Develop Green Building Design guidelines and certification process to reduce energy consumption, water consumption, increase more efficient use of natural resources, and make improved living environment.

## Demonstration of Model Community Forests to Promote Community Forestry Development and Improve Livelihood of Local Community

**Objectives:** To strengthen the participatory forest conservation and management as well as reduce poverty of local communities through livelihood improvement under Community Forestry



## Enhancing Community and Small-scale Water Resource Management in the Mekong Region

**Objectives:** to assess Small-scale Water Resource Management (SWRM) at locals using participatory action research, and to identify prototypes of knowledge and practices to be further developed, to equip farmers' leaders and farmer organizations with skills, knowledge of SWRM, and to advocate SWRM among local, national and regional policy makers.



# 03 | PRIORITY AREA: ENVIRONMENT



MEKONG INSTITUTE



## Capacity Building on Circular Economy, Resource and Energy Efficiency for Productivity and Sustainability of Cassava Chain to High Value Products

**Objectives:** To strengthen and sustain the development of the CLMVT region's cassava industry by knowledge and technology transfer as well as promote cooperation between research and industrial work at several levels.



Module 1: Cassava Cultivation



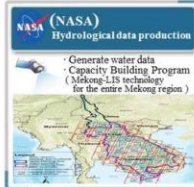
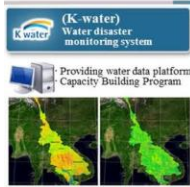
Module 2: Starch Technology



Module 3: Waste Management & Utilization

## Developing of climate change-related disaster hazard zoning map and enhancing the salinity intrusion monitoring network in Can Tho city

**Objectives:** Integrating climate change-disaster hazard zoning map and disaster warning map into the city's socio-economic development plans to enhance the effectiveness of climate change responses in the future, contributing to develop disaster hazard zoning map for the Mekong Delta region.



## Water Data Utilization and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region

**Objectives:** To develop and provide a satellite-based disaster analysis capability that produces and utilizes hydrological data to mitigate the water-related disasters such as floods and drought, and build capacity on water data utilization in the Mekong region.

# 03 | PRIORITY AREA: AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



MEKONG INSTITUTE



## Sustainable and Smart Agricultural Supply Chain Development in Mekong Countries

**Objectives:** To improve production effectiveness and efficiency, reduce post-harvest losses, and increase energy efficiency in agricultural supply chains through cold chain development and smart and sustainable technologies in post-COVID situation in the Mekong countries.

## Soil, Water and Nutrient Management (SWNM) for Increasing Farm Household Income in Drought Zones of the Lao PDR

**Objectives:** To create the best soil, water and nutrient management models farms in drought areas of Laos



## Impact of Migration on Rural Development with Special Emphasis on Agriculture of Mon State, Myanmar

**Objectives:** To reduce impacts of migration in the rural area and to upgrade agriculture sector, a major economic activity of the rural area and its related activities through value chain agriculture product productions

### 03 | PRIORITY AREA: ICT



MEKONG INSTITUTE



Building Electronic Origin Data Exchange System (EODES) between Mekong Countries and Korea

**Objectives:** Building EODES with low rate of transmission error between customs authorities of Korea and Viet Nam

Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening for Logistics Monitoring and Evaluation Database Development in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam

**Objectives:** Developing logistics monitoring and evaluating framework and creating logistics database of CLV countries for analyzing logistics improvement or development



Development of Regional Cooperation Project Monitoring Data Center

**Objectives:** To effectively monitor and evaluate regional cooperation project implementation among member countries, where lesson learnt can be shared and exchanged through a common platform of database

### 03 | PRIORITY AREA: INFRASTRUCTURE, AND NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES



MEKONG INSTITUTE



Capacity Building for Road Maintenance Methodology to Promote Sustainable Infrastructure in CLV Countries

**Objectives:** The project objective is to build capacity of the technical workers, relevant officials and construction workers through road maintenance training programs to promote resilient and sustainable infrastructure in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam (CLV) countries.

Capacity Enhancement of Wind Energy for Sustainable Rural Development in Myanmar

**Objectives:** To provide electricity and lighting and alternative energy technology to the rural population of Myanmar.



Master Plan Establishment and Capacity Building for the Modernization and Advancement of Hydro-meteorological Infrastructure at Mekong River Basin in Lao PDR

**Objectives:** To contribute to the modernization and advancement of national hydro-meteorological services of Lao PDR.

Sharing of Experiences, Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Controlling Covid-19 Outbreaks between ROK and Mekong countries

**Objectives:** Sharing of evidence-based management and the appropriate innovative tools and intervention on COVID-19







- Contributing to on-going COVID-19 responses, recovery and building future resilience
- Strengthening results-based implementation and experience sharing
- Greater synergies among MKCF funded projects as well as with broader Mekong-Korea cooperation and other Mekong related cooperation frameworks
- Emphasis on capacity development in advancing policy implementation



ASEAN  
PRIZE  
RECIPIENT 2021



<https://www.mekonginstitute.org/what-we-do/development-fund/mekong-republic-of-korea-cooperation-fund/>

*Introduction of KMCRC and Mekong Water Management Project*

*Dr. Park Jin-hyeog*

*Director of the Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center*



Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center



Dr. Park, Jin Hyeog  
KMCRC Director  
park5103@kwater.or.kr

Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center

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- Foundation and History
- Mission
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- Flood
- Drought

### 03 Ongoing Water Projects

- Korea-Mekong Fund
- Ministry of Environment

### 04 Roadmap and Vision of KMCRC

- Roadmap
- Vision



## Foundation

### ● **New Southern Policy(NSP) : National Political Agenda**

- Promotes cooperative relationship with the new southern countries (including the Mekong region)
- Water-related Issues in the Mekong Region(**Key location of the New Southern Policy**)
  - Political, security, economic hub
  - Strategic region of hegemonic competition between US and China
  - **ROK-US Mekong Collaboration** (Improved Hydrologic and Hydraulic Decision Support for the Mekong Basin)

### ● **The 1<sup>st</sup> Korea-Mekong Summit Conference (Busan, '19.11)**

→ **"Mekong River Declaration", MOU with MRC ('19.12)**

#### ● **VIP the Mekong River Declaration ('19.11.27)**

Establish the **Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center(KMCRC)** in the ROK and continue cooperative projects **to promote Mekong-ROK cooperation on sustainable and integrated water resources management** to ensure the sustainability of the Mekong river basin development and to address common challenges in the region

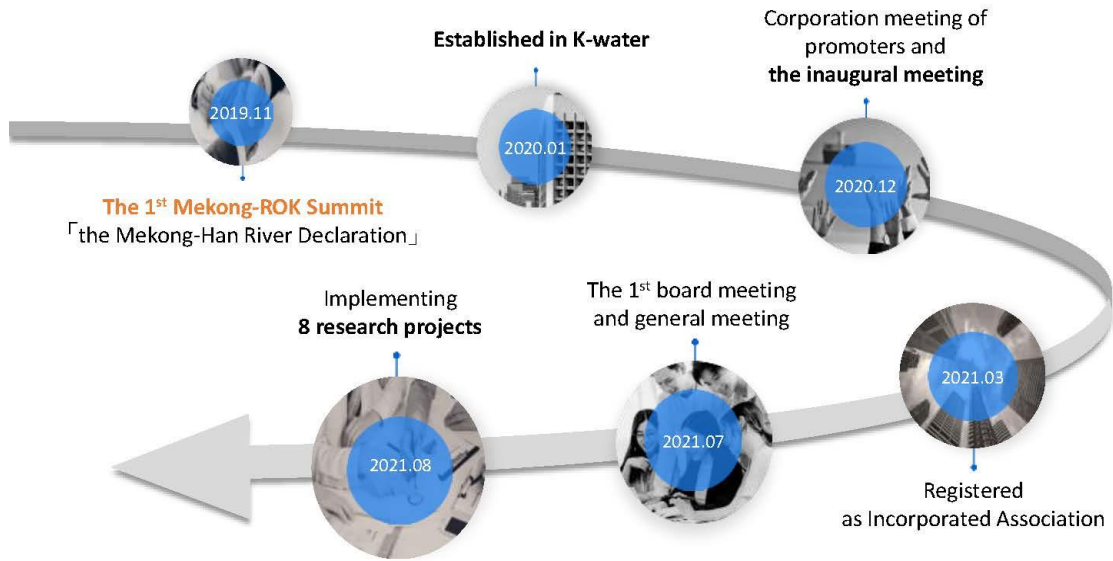


Foundation



History

**KMCR** has officially launched as cooperation of non-profit organization based on the Korean civil law in March 2021 to promote water sector collaboration between the Republic of Korea and Mekong region countries.



# Cooperation Network

As the only research and technology cooperation center specializing in the water sector regarding the Mekong region in Korea, KMCRC is acting as a platform for R&D and technology cooperation



## Government



## International Organizations

6 Countries 4 Organizations (3 MOUs, 1MOA)



## Domestic Organizations



# Water Issues in Mekong Region



# Introduction of the Mekong Basin

- ### Mekong River
- Tibet Plateau, China → (Passing through) Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam → to the South China Sea
  - 12<sup>th</sup> in length(4020km), 10<sup>th</sup> in flux scale **(the largest river in Southeast Asia)**
  - Significant difference in water quantity between the dry season and the wet season

- ### Water Issues in the Mekong Basin
- Recent Climate Change and Rapid Urbanization
- Vulnerable to water resources management
  - Water-related disasters (flood, drought)
  - Water conflicts (Dams, Security of water resources)



## Water Issues in the Mekong Basin

**Countries in the Lower Mekong River Basin**

**Laos (Basin proportion: 35%)**

- Main uses: **Hydroelectric Power**
- High potential of hydroelectric power** → battery of the Southeast Asia
- Land use change and forest development → Significant impact on water quality

**Vietnam (Basin proportion: 11%)**

- Mekong Delta region → 2<sup>nd</sup> largest rice exporter
- Drought issue** due to climate change and construction of the upstream dams
- Major issue: **Sea level rise and seawater inflow**
- Habitual inundation and land subsidence during the rainy season

**Thailand (Basin proportion: 18%)**

- Main uses: **Agriculture Irrigation Water and Urban Water**
- Land use change and forest development → Significant impact on water quality

**Cambodia (Basin proportion: 11%)**

- Main uses: **Agricultural Water**
- Fishing on the Mekong River and Tonle Sap Lake** → Important resource for Cambodia (**Southeast Asia's Largest Freshwater Fishery**)
- Interested in hydroelectric power, irrigation water management and irrigation facilities expansion

**Common water issues**

- Changes in rainfall patterns due to climate change
- Intensified flood and drought
- Reduction of sediment discharge due to construction of upstream dams



## On Going Water Projects

### Projects

6 research projects related to Mekong region countries  
(2 ongoing projects, 3 new projects, 1 finished project)

|               | Name of Project                                                                                                                                   | Cost/Period         | Note      |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Organizing    | <b>[Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund] Water Data Utilization and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region (~22.10)</b>                                   | \$1million/3years   | Ongoing   |
| Organizing    | <b>[Ministry of Environment] Strategy Research on Water Industry Expansion to the Mekong Basin and a Research Collaborative Platform (~21.5~)</b> | ₩150million/1year   |           |
| Participating | [Ministry of Land] Vietnam Mekong Delta Smart City Demonstrative Project Exploration and Pre-FS(~21.9)                                            | ₩440million/9months | Finished  |
| Organizing    | [UNDP] Mekong Basin(Laos, Cambodia) IWRM and Climatization Improvement(21.9~)                                                                     | ₩2400million/3years | Scheduled |
| Organizing    | [ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund] ASEAN-ROK Future Water Environment R&D Platform Construction(~21~)                                                   | ₩850million/3years  |           |
| Organizing    | [KOICA] Cambodia Mekong Delta Integrated Water Management Master Plan Establishment(~21~)                                                         | ₩2400million/~23    |           |

# ① Water Data Utilization and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region

## Introduction

- Purpose** Water management technology (Korea) & Satellite Technology (NASA) and water resources modeling (USACE)
   
→ To produce hydrological data by utilizing the satellite-based technology and to apply hydrologic and hydraulic analysis technology in Mekong river basin as study site and carry out trainee capacity building program.
- Financial Resources** \$1 million / Korea(Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund)· U.S.(State Department) joint burden
   
(ROK-US Mekong Collaboration)
- Period / Target Region** '19.10 ~ '22.10 (3 years) / Lower Mekong Basin
- Executing Organization** Organizer: KMCRC
   
Participants: K-water Institute, NASA, USACE



## Contents

⇒ Generate and utilize satellite-based water resources data / Acquire hydrologic/hydraulic analysis technology

### Technology Development

- **K-water & NASA** Generating water resources data, monitoring water-related disasters
- **collaborate with USACE** Constructing hydrologic and hydraulic test models

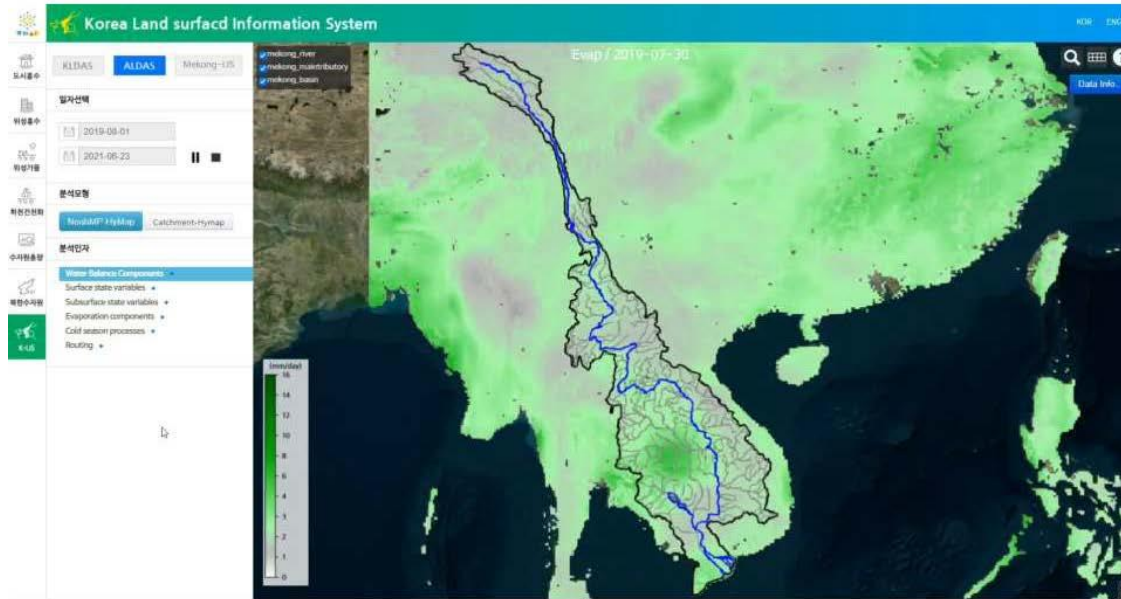
### Capacity Building

- Developing and operating training programs focused on Mekong countries and MRC staffs (Training local staffs→ Enhance the water management capacity of Mekong countries)

## Future Plans

- ROK-US Mekong Collaboration Capacity Building Training and Technology Forum**
  - \* Organizer: US State Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NASA, USACE, K-water, MI / Participants: MRC, NMCs
- Test the Generation of K-LIS Hydrologic Data and Building Hydrologic and Hydraulic Models (HEC, K-series)**

- 40 kinds of **hydrologic information** such as rainfall, evapotranspiration, soil moisture, snow melt and so on







## ② Strategy Research on Water Industry Expansion of the Mekong River Basin and a Collaborative Platform

### Introduction

- **Purpose**
  - Investigate the current situation of main donors(U.S., Japan, China) entering into the Mekong water market of main donors
  - Establish a strategy for Korea water resources management technology considering Mekong River Basin water issues
  - Find cooperation agendas in the Mekong region for the New Southern Policy and Mekong-ROK Summit
  - Arrange mid/long-term development plans for KMCRC
- **Period** 2021.05 ~ 2022.05 (12 months)
- **Cost** 146,982,000 won
- **Executing Organizations**



KMCRC




K-water Water Policy Research Center

### Contents/Role

Investigate initiation background of consultative group in Mekong and current status of activity

Identify relation between main donors and Mekong region consultative groups



Analyze current status of Mekong countries and suggest prospects

Establish inroad strategies for domestic Water Management technology into the Mekong River Basin

**Build platform for research collaboration and Arrange mid/long-term development plan (Using external and internal experts)**

### Upcoming Schedule

2021.05

2022.01

2022.05

Investigate current water market status /Identify organizational relationships

Analyze the status of water industries in main donor countries and prepare strategies

Establish a multilateral cooperative plan /Derive target markets and main fields

Build a platform for research collaboration and support domestic industries by developing overseas inroads



# Roadmap



# Vision



*Remarks*  
*H.E. Panyarak Poolthup,*  
*Ambassador of Thailand to Cambodia*

First of all, may I extend my sincere appreciation to MFAIC, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea and CICP, for kindly inviting me to today Seminar on Mekong-ROK Cooperation, and allowing me to provide a brief intervention on the future direction of the Mekong - Republic of Korea Cooperation (Mekong-ROK cooperation). I would also like to express my sincere congratulations to everyone involved in the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Mekong – ROK cooperation and its accomplishments.

**A decade of achievements.** Since 2011, the Mekong countries appreciate the ROK for over 30 projects to support this sub-region. Important areas of cooperation include water resource management, health and medicine, digital government and ICT, forestry and tourism and most importantly is the sharing of experiences and best practices in controlling COVID-19 pandemic. The next practical step is to ensure that the results of the projects are translated into concrete and sustainable actions by relevant agencies of the Mekong - ROK member countries.

**As we enter the second decade of the Mekong – ROK cooperation,** we need to build back and recover from the challenges of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic better, safer, smarter and greener. First is the public health issue. I encourage the ROK and Mekong countries to continue to work hand-in-hand to ensure universal and equitable access to effective vaccines in a timely manner. Secondly, I would like to emphasize the importance of developing green economy partnership. Recently, Thailand has adopted the Bio - Circular - Green (BCG) Economy Model to achieve balanced and sustainable growth. Comparing to the ROK’s Green New Deal, I believe these Thai and Korean strategies which aim to find a balance between economic, social and environmental dimensions, are complementary for future cooperation in fostering green growth in the Mekong sub-region.

In terms of a sub-regional cooperation, the ACMECS which is the Mekong’s homegrown sub-regional framework initiated by Thailand in 2003 and collectively led by the five Mekong countries, has been working closely with the ROK. We are particularly thankful to the ROK as the first ACMECS Development Partner for contributing one million USD to the ACMECS - ROK cooperation projects. Our member countries look forward to continuing to work with the ROK for sustainable development of the Mekong sub-region.

Excellencies,

The Mekong - ROK partnership has achieved a decade of shared development for peace, prosperity and people. I strongly believe that this framework will continue to be a constructive platform for our cooperation. I hope this seminar will ignite ideas for the Mekong – ROK framework’s future plan that will benefit the ROK and the countries in the sub-region. The Royal Thai Embassy stands ready to support all initiatives and cooperation under the Mekong – ROK framework.

**Wish you all a successful seminar.**

**Thank you for your kind attention.**



**Remarks**  
**H.E. Amphay Kindavong**  
**Ambassador of Laos to Cambodia**

Today, it's my great honor and privilege for me to be invited here and speak on this "Hybrid Seminar on Mekong - ROK Cooperation" co-hosting by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Embassy of the ROK to mark the 10th Anniversary of Mekong - ROK Cooperation.

We highly evaluate and proud that the Mekong - ROK Cooperation framework has been elevated to be a Strategic Partnership during the Mekong - ROK Summit in 2020 last year.

Let me take this opportunity to extend my warmest congratulations on the 10th Anniversary of Mekong - ROK Cooperation, and it is the Mekong - ROK Exchange Year also, we consider this cooperation has contributed in building peace, stability, and sustainable development in the region.

We, Laos, highly evaluate and appreciated to the Government and people of ROK for the great assistance to the Mekong countries, especially with Laos for the social-economic development in the past, in the Mekong - ROK Cooperation framework for 5 projects, which one project was completed and another 4 projects are still ongoing with total amount of 1,980,524\$.

Now, as we all are facing big impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, to recover our social-economic impact, I think we need more help and cooperation in this framework.

Before ending my remark, may I wish the Mekong - ROK Cooperation be further extend and great success.

I wish the seminar today to be successful and wish you all good health, happiness and great success.

Thank you

**Remarks**  
**H.E. U Thit Linn Ohn**  
**Ambassador of Myanmar to Cambodia**

At the very outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Embassy of the Republic of Korea, and the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace for arranging and co-hosting this seminar.

Since the establishment in 2011, the Mekong - ROK Cooperation has contributed to the promotion of mutual beneficial and multi-sectorial cooperation among the Republic of Korea and Mekong riparian countries in order to reduce the regional development gap.

Moreover, the agreement has been reached to upgrade the Mekong - ROK Cooperation into “Strategic Partnership” and to designate the year 2021 as the “Mekong - ROK Exchange Year” at the 2nd Mekong - ROK Summit. It was agreed to extend until the year 2022 at the 11th Mekong - ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting.

Therefore, today seminar is quite timely and relevant in celebrating the 10th Year Anniversary of our Mekong - ROK Cooperation

**Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,**

In 2013, the Republic of Korea has set up the Mekong - ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF) to support the development projects in Mekong Countries. I am happy to learn that the annual contribution of ROK has been increased to USD 4 million to MKCF, starting from 2021 and also increase Official Development Aid to the member countries.

From 2013 to date, Myanmar has received 5 projects in five batches, a total of USD 1.3 million in areas of statistics, education, forestry, and environment, agriculture, and rural development, which have benefited to the socio-economic development in Myanmar.

At the 11th Mekong - ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held recently on 8 September 2021 via video conference, the Co-Chair Statement of the Meeting was adopted, and endorsed the Fifth Batch Projects for 2021 to support MKCF.

In which, the Project called “Impact of Migration on Rural Development with Special Emphasis on Agriculture of Mon State, Myanmar” is included and the preliminary negotiation for its implementation has been underway between the Mekong Institute and the Mawlamyine University.

Our cooperation has extended to the private sector as well with the participation of Business Organizations of Member States, and the Mekong - ROK Business Council was created to lay a solid foundation for expansion of trade and investment opportunities for the business communities.

The Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI) also organized the Mekong - ROK Business Council CEO Dialogue in 2020 to gain deeper understanding of the Mekong market and to create business opportunities for entrepreneurs of both Mekong countries and ROK.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For our future cooperation, I would like to highlight the following three suggestions made by my Union Minister for Foreign Affairs at the 11th Mekong - ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

First, the Mekong - ROK cooperation should intensify cooperation on health security sector for prevention, control and treatment of emerging and re-emerging communicable diseases, in particular of new COVID-19 variants.

Second, due to the pandemic, there has been economic hardship in the region. The situation requires to create positive environment for economic recovery, and to make design upgrade to the Mekong - ROK cooperation mechanism supportive to economic resilience at each member country. For examples; upgrading regions ICT infrastructure, safe, systematic and integrated travel system, closed cooperation of Business Councils' of Mekong countries and ROK.

Third, enhance cooperation in higher education as well as technical and vocational education training since youths are indispensable for future development of Mekong Region.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to express my best wishes for the continued achievements in Mekong - ROK Cooperation from a decade long journey to century, and also to encourage the business communities from ROK and our partner countries to do more investments in our countries, for sustainable development and economic growth in the Mekong Region.

I thank you.

*Remarks*  
*H.E. Nguyen Huy Tang*  
*Ambassador of Vietnam to Cambodia*

It is my honor and privilege to be invited to deliver a speech at the Hybrid Seminar on Mekong-ROK Cooperation co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mekong-ROK cooperation.

This seminar provides a valuable opportunity for us to review the recorded achievements and discuss the ways for better cooperation in the years to come in the form of Strategic Partnership upgraded in 2020.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since its establishment in 2011, the Mekong – RoK cooperation mechanism has played a significant role in promoting the multi-faceted relationship among 6 countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and the RoK), focusing on 7 priorities that include: (1) Culture and Tourism; (2) Human Resource Development; (3) Agriculture and Rural Development; (4) Infrastructure; (5) Information and Communication Technology (ICT); (6) Environment; and (7) Non-traditional Security Challenges. Some prominent projects have been implemented such as Projects of Smart-cities, Climate change adaptation in Agriculture, Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritages, Rural and Forestry Development, , Water Management and Irrigation, Logistic, Smart Tourism, Education and Vocational Training, Korea-Mekong Water Resources Collaboration Research Center (KMCRC), Mekong-Korea Biodiversity Center, etc.

Over the past two years, despite the complicated developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mekong countries and the ROK still maintain the momentum of cooperation in various fields, notably, the elevation of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation to a Strategic Partnership for People, Prosperity and Peace on the occasion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mekong-ROK Summit held on November 13, 2020; the adaptation of the Action Plan 2021-2025 and successful organization of the 8<sup>th</sup> Mekong–ROK Business Forum in Hanoi in December 2020. We highly appreciate the support of the ROK to Mekong countries in fighting COVID-19 pandemic, restoring the economies and promoting the sustainable development by the contribution of 4 million USD to the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF) in 2021; 200 million USD to COVAX mechanism by 2022 and ODA for promoting regional connectivity, sustainable development and contributing to the process of building ASEAN Community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The current context is posing significant challenges to the Mekong-ROK cooperation. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is still having profound impacts on the economic recovery and development of all countries in the Mekong-ROK cooperation. Its member countries have all made great efforts to control the pandemic and recover the economies in new normalcy. Besides, the Mekong region is also facing the challenges caused by natural disasters, climate change, drought, soil salinity and flood. Taking all these into account for our pathway ahead, the Mekong-ROK cooperation should prioritize on controlling the Covid-19 pandemic to help member countries overcome the current challenges; and at the same time, making good water resource management, ensuring sustainability and efficiency of water use and water-related resources; adapting the climate change and natural disaster in the region.

For that reason, the Mekong-ROK cooperation should prioritize on the following:

1. Controlling the pandemic by ensuring the timely, sufficiently, equitably access to COVID-19 vaccines to all countries; sharing experience and transferring technology to help Mekong members manufacture vaccines themselves.
2. Accelerating the recognition of “Vaccine passport” of each other to facilitate the reopening of commercial flights, promoting tourism on the basis of strictly practicing the regulations against Covid-19 in the new normalcy.
3. Closely coordinating and connecting among the members to ensure the trade flows and minimize the disruption of supply chains, labor chain; maintaining and developing the production activities and business.
4. Promoting digital transformation and building E-economy, especially organizing the “Mekong-ROK Digital and Blue Economy Forum”, building Mekong-ROK SMEs portal to assist enterprises in accessing information and enhancing the digital capabilities.
5. Improving the capacity of climate change adaptation as well as sustainable use and management of Mekong water resources.
6. Enhancing cooperation in education-training and high-quality human resources development.
7. Strengthening public-private cooperation, promoting the participation of SMEs and MSMEs, facilitating trade flows, investment, and diversification of the regional supply chains.
8. Enhancing connectivity, coordination, supplement between Mekong-ROK mechanism and ASEAN and other Mekong mechanisms.
9. Promoting the advertisement and organizing events in the Mekong - ROK Exchange Year 2022.
10. Supporting Cambodia to successfully assume the Chair of ASEAN in 2022

I thank you.

*A Korean Perspective on the Mekong Cooperation:  
What Does ROK Expect from Mekong Cooperation?*

*Dr. Choe Wongi,*

*Professor in the Department of Asian and Pacific Studies*

*Head of Center for ASEAN – India Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy*

Thank you very much. I feel very much honored to be invited to this event and make a presentation today. First of all, I would like to extend my big congratulations and a deep gratitude to both Ambassador Park at the Korean Embassy in Cambodia and as well as Ambassador Pou Sothirak of the Cambodian Institute of Cooperation and Peace (CICP), for co-organizing this important webinar.

Today, I would like to make three points regarding Republic of Korea (ROK)'s perspective on the Mekong Cooperation. While ROK has been very active in Mekong cooperation for the last decade, people have not talked much about ROK's underlying motivations and approaches toward the Mekong cooperation.

What is ROK's strategic perspective and stance about the Mekong region? What kind of key objectives does ROK aim for in its Mekong initiative? Also, what kind of expectations does ROK have from Mekong countries? Today, I would like to address these questions from a macro-perspective in a larger context, and make three specific points.

What I speak today is, of course, my personal view, and has nothing to do with the official position of ROK government.

First, even if the ROK government does not make explicit statements about this, I think that maintaining and enhancing strategic autonomy and capacities of Mekong countries is the most important goal for ROK's Mekong initiative. I don't think ROK would be happy if the entire Mekong region is going to fall under the exclusive sphere of influence by a particular country. It is in ROK's strategic interests that the Mekong countries are able to maintain a certain degree of strategic autonomy and independence from the dominant influence and interference by a particular external country.

For a benign external partner like ROK, it is very important to make sure that Mekong countries achieve robust economic growth and become stronger economically enough to maintain a degree of strategic autonomy from any external interventions. Also, the strategic stability of the Mekong region is very important and should not be disrupted by geopolitical shifts such as the expansion of China's influence in this region, or the ongoing US-China strategic rivalry.

In this respect, ROK is making earnest efforts in empowering Mekong countries by assisting their economic and social developments, and helping them to close the developmental gaps and enhance the connectivity in the greater Mekong region.



Inclusive, sustainable economic and social development of the Mekong region is in ROK's strategic interests. Effective mitigation of the harmful effects of climate change, management of the water-resources of the greater Mekong region in a politically-sound and environmentally-sustainable way, and maintenance of the biodiversity in the Mekong's natural habitats are very important for ROK's Mekong initiative. ROK wants to contribute to these goals by playing its part through ROK-Mekong cooperation mechanism.

Second, development cooperation is the central and key area for ROK's engagement with Mekong countries. For ROK, development cooperation is not a tool or instrument for achieving some other political objectives or larger strategic goals. We don't have any hidden agenda here. For ROK, development cooperation in itself is the most important policy objective in our Mekong initiative.

I think ROK is well positioned to reach out to Mekong countries because of the successful development experiences. In fact, ROK is regarded as a role model for successful economic development, and Seoul is revered as a most valuable and attractive partner for development cooperation. For this reason, development cooperation is an area where ROK has been recognized as a leader in the world.

In this respect, we want to focus on what we are good at in our approach to Mekong cooperation. Experience of successful development is ROK's most important competitive advantage and strategic asset, and we are open and ready to share our rich development know-hows and experience with the Mekong partners.

For the last several years, ROK has been rapidly increasing the amount of ODA for the Mekong partners. 17% of ROK's overall bilateral ODAs have been devoted to the Mekong region in 2019, and Mekong countries are now the key ODA partners to ROK. The ROK-Mekong Cooperation Fund, MKCF, has been increased to 4 million US dollars this year as previous speakers pointed out, and ROK government is making further efforts to increase this number even more in the days ahead.

This positive trend is expected to continue, and ROK will continue to invest heavily in the ODA with the Mekong in the coming future.

My third and last point: ROK regards Mekong countries as a key economic partner from a long-term perspective. An important goal of the NSP is economic diversification, i.e., diversifying ROK's external economic relations from a few large trading partners like China by expanding toward the ASEAN and Mekong countries in particular, India and other countries, etc.

In this respect, Mekong countries stand out as a key partner in the future of ROK's economic diversification strategy. For now, the trade and investment relations between ROK and the Mekong is very shallow and not deep enough since we are still at a very early stage of economic interactions, except for Vietnam. Vietnam is now a key trade partner to ROK. In fact, Vietnam takes about half

of our overall trade with 10 ASEAN member countries. We hope to replicate the experience of our successful economic engagement with Vietnam to other Mekong countries in the coming future.

Mekong countries are expected to achieve a sustained level of economic growth in the coming future, and ROK's strategy is to make Mekong region as ROK's key trade, investment and industrial cooperation partner in the coming future.

In this respect, the role of private businesses in both Cambodia and ROK is very important. And also, the ROK-Cambodia bilateral FTA should serve as an important institutional platform upon which to build stronger economic ties in the future. ROK hopes to develop a mutually beneficial, long-term economic partnership with the Mekong. I think ROK will be here to stay as a reliable partner to the Mekong in the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, enhancing strategic autonomy of Mekong countries is a key goal for ROK; Also, Mekong is ROK's key ODA partner and ROK gives priority to inclusive and sustainable development of the Mekong region; and finally, we regard the Mekong as key partner for our economic diversification strategy in the coming future.

Thank you for your attention.

## *Mekong/MRC-ROK Cooperation, Opportunities and Challenges*

*Dr. An Pich Hatda*

*Chief Executive Officer, Mekong River Commission*

### **1. Background**

The Mekong River Basin continues to be a highly dynamic region, driven by economic growth and an increasing population. The development of the Mekong's waters contributes considerably to higher income, reduced poverty, and greater access to electricity. Nevertheless, the gains have not been equally distributed and have implications on the environment causing transboundary impacts and tensions. According to the MRC's 2018 State of the Basin Report, substantial challenges to the sustainable development and management of the basin include: severe floods and droughts, reduction of sediment transport, riverbank erosion, rapid fluctuations in river levels and flows, and deterioration of environmental assets and fisheries. As such, governing the Mekong waters is an economic, social, and political issue that requires a deeper and more strategic cooperation between countries and regional actors to achieve a well-balanced development of the basin.

In line with the new BDS 2021-2030 and the MRC Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the MRC is promoting the whole-of-basin cooperation approach bringing the Upper and Lower Mekong River Basin much closer together through increased relationship and cooperation between the MRC Member Countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Viet Nam, and the Dialogue Partners - China and Myanmar – as well as between the MRC and Mekong Lancang Cooperation (MLC/LMC) water cooperation platform. Additionally, the MRC is working to enhance technical collaboration and exchanges with various partners from interested countries, regional, international and river basin organizations to policy-oriented research institutes. The Republic of Korea (ROK) is one of the MRC's partners, supporting various MRC activities through the Korea Development Institute (KDI) and the Korea Water Resources Corporation (K-Water).

### **2. Mekong – ROK Cooperation**

Recognizing the importance of regional cooperation in the Mekong region, ROK launched the Mekong- ROK partnership in 2011 and established the Mekong–Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF) in 2012 to support cooperation in seven priority areas: **culture and tourism, human resources development, agriculture and rural development, infrastructure, information and communications, environment, and non-traditional challenges**. Cooperation initiatives are being implemented by five participatory countries – Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam – through the Plan of Action 2021-2025, adapted at the 10<sup>th</sup> Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2020.

Mekong-ROK relation is deepened through high level consultation mechanisms such as annual inter- governmental meetings including annual summit, foreign ministers’ meeting, senior officials’ meeting, Mekong-ROK business forum.

By 2019, ROK has provided about **USD 33 billion** in form of Official Development Assistance to countries in the Mekong on a bilateral basis. From 2013 to 2020, USD 9.4 million to MKCF to foster regional support and cooperation among the six Mekong member countries, in addition to contributing USD 0.99 million for the ROK- Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) in 2020<sup>1</sup>. MKCF has supported more than 20 projects in the areas of water infrastructure, information communication technology, green growth, water resource development, agriculture and rural development, and human resource development.

To maximize effectiveness of its regional efforts, ROK has been promoting synergies with ASEAN regional integration process and other regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks, including the MRC, ACMECS, Cambodia – Lao PDR – Myanmar – Viet Nam Cooperation (CLMV), Cambodia – Lao PDR – Viet Nam Development Triangle Area (CLV-DTA), Mekong – US Partnership (MUSP), Japan-U.S. Mekong Power Partnership (JUMPP), Friends of the Mekong (FOM), Greater Mekong Sub-region Economic Cooperation (GMS), Mekong-Japan Cooperation, and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC).

To realize the objective, at the Mekong-ROK summit in 2019, ROK issued the Mekong-Han River Declaration focusing on three pillars of “People, Prosperity and Peace” that paves the way for the Mekong and Korea to cooperate on various water resources sectors that are important to the region’s mutual benefits. Cooperation and partnership between the Mekong and the Republic of Korea in the environment and water sectors has been a top priority in the Declaration. It was a topic priority because the sustainability of the Mekong River Basin, its development and common challenges need to be ensured and addressed.

### **3. MRC – ROK Cooperation**

As part of the Mekong-ROK Partnership Initiative, the MRC and our Korean partners – namely KDI and K- Water – established collaboration through MOU. In addition, the ROK government will also be supporting the MRC through joint projects with other partners such as the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the Korea Cooperative Supporting Center for Overseas Port Development (KCSCOPD).

- **MRC – KDI Cooperation**

KDI was established in 1971 to conduct policy research and analysis on fundamental economic and social issues using scientific methods to support the nation's development efforts. The institute has also led Korea's efforts to take a greater role in the international development community, expanding its research and knowledge sharing activities and global footprint through the Center for International Development.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Mekong Institute

With support from the South Korea’s Ministry of Strategy and Finance, the MRC established an MOU with KDI in 2017 and launched the MRC-KDI Knowledge Sharing Program (KSP) that creates an avenue for the two to collaborate on sharing knowledge and experience in various fields of water related resources.

The 1st KSP on “water security and hydropower development” was completed in 2018 with an exchange visit to Korea and a comprehensive report that provided actionable insights for the improvement of river basin planning and hydropower development and management that can nurture more socio-economic and environmental benefits. The policy recommendations were used to inform the update of the Sustainable Hydropower Development Strategy for the Lower Mekong River Basin.

The recently completed 2nd KSP focused on flood and drought management, providing recommendations to help lower Mekong governments to better manage flood and drought, such as by developing map- based flood and drought monitoring systems to prepare countermeasures by analyzing areas vulnerable to flood and drought. It recommends using AI, radars, and satellites to develop early-warning systems, with built-in triggers for actions such as declaring a flood or a drought; and accumulating high-quality hydro-meteorological data for an integrated basin-wide flood and drought management strategy.

- **MRC – K-Water Cooperation**

K-Water is the governmental agency for comprehensive water resource development and providing both public and industrial water in the Republic of Korea. It operates 16 multi-purpose dams in Korea. K-Water also has strong international profile, including projects in the Mekong countries and Southeast Asia. The MRC and K-Water signed an MOU in 2019 to collaborate in three areas: 1) high-level and technical meetings to share knowledge and experience, 2) capacity building on water data utilization, and 3) establishment and operation of the Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaboration Center.

As part of the capacity building on water data utilization, K-Water, in collaboration with USACE and NASA, is providing a series of training sessions to the MRC Member Countries on modeling tools (including the USACE’s HEC modeling tools) and conducting a pilot study on specific areas of the Mekong.

- **MRC – Ministry of Science and ICT**

The Korea’s Ministry of Science and ICT through UNOSSC will support the MRC Member Countries to address environment-development linkages including to better managing climate-related disaster risks. The assistance is provided through the “Triangular Cooperation Project on Sustainable Development in Lower Mekong Basin based on the Water-Energy-Food Nexus”, to be jointly implemented by UNOSSC, the MRC, Science and Technology Policy Institute (STEPI) and MI over the period of five years starting from 2021.

The project will review past and ongoing projects in the Mekong Basin focusing on the water, energy and food nexus and compile knowledge that will be given to the selected countries for pilot area selection and design of the pilot projects in each country. The models will be piloted in four countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

In addition, the project, which has been selected as the ROK's regional development cooperation initiative under its New Southern Policy and Green New Deal (GND), will aim at helping the Mekong Basin countries nurture a people-centered community of peace and prosperity with a particular focus on science, technology, and innovation approach to the development challenges.

- **MRC – Ministry of OCEANS and Fisheries**

The Korea Cooperative Supporting Center for Overseas Port Development (KCSCOPD), with support from the Korea's Ministry of OCEANS and Fisheries, will collaborate with the MRC to carry out cooperative activities for improving the Mekong River inland waterway transport, including for the establishment of "Mekong River Inland Waterway Improvement Roadmap Project". The collaboration project aims to assist the Member Countries in reviewing the implementation of the MRC Navigation Master Plan and exchange of information of law, regulations and policies in the areas related to inland waterway transport. The MRC and the Ministry of OCEANS and Fisheries plan to sign an MOU in early 2022 to kick start the collaboration initiative.

#### **4. Challenges and Opportunities for Further Collaboration**

Cooperation with Korea through the Knowledge Sharing Programme has brought some benefits for the MRC Member Countries to learn about advanced technologies and approaches for river basin management (Han River) and flood and drought management and forecasting. However, the reports produced under the KSP have not met the MRC's needs to the full extent.

The MRC is proposing the 3<sup>rd</sup> KSP to help the Member Countries realize the key recommendations from the 2<sup>nd</sup> KSP, especially in using technologies and innovation for flood and drought management and forecasting. This will contribute to successful implementation of the new Basin Development Strategy 2021-2030 and the MRC Strategic Plan 2021-2025, of which one of the main strategic priorities is to strengthen resilience against climate risk in the Mekong River Basin.

K-Water is a major Korean water agency with experiences and expertise in water management, modeling and hydropower operation. Cooperation with MRC is recent, and benefits are only beginning in terms of capacity building. The MRC will continue to work with K-Water to fully implement the MOU for more benefits.

It is expected that cooperation with the Korean STEPI through the UNOSSC project will bring about modern Korean technologies and knowledge to trial concrete pilot projects in the Mekong countries in the water-food-energy areas. Technologies include water harvesting, soft water storage systems, and flood water diversion for groundwater recharge systems; irrigation efficient technologies such as drip irrigation and sub-soil irrigation; and cropping systems'



strategies, including crop, soil, and production systems, as well as smart water management technologies, including smart metering.

The support from the KCSCOPD is expected to revitalize the implementation of the MRC Regional Masterplan for waterborne transport, identifying implementation gaps and proposing and catalyzing needed investments in order to contribute to Mekong connectivity and trade.

While the above projects are beneficial for the MRC, they are more ad-hoc and not formulated from a strategic perspective. To be more impactful, the Republic of Korea Government is invited to become a development partner of the MRC, and thereby contributing to realizing the agenda set by the MRC Member Countries for managing and developing the basin. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea should also play a more leading role in coordinating the support of various Korean agencies in the Mekong, in order to enhance synergies, reduce process and minimize duplication.

*Further consolidation of ROK-Mekong relations*

*Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn*

*Veteran Journalist and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS – Thailand)*

Although Republic of Korea is a late comer in the Mekong's developmental scene, the country has made an impressive progress. One reason in my view was the experience of Korea in development and transformation of the Han River into a great piece of environment land mark and clean river. This successful story inspires the lower riparian countries to follow the good practice. In addition, ROK has learned valuable lessons from the decade-old relationship with this Mekong community. Seoul has put into good uses the New Southern Policy, which has placed focused on peace, people and prosperity. Exactly three important elements that the Mekong people really need.

All these pillars are interconnected. To ascertain that the future of ROK-Mekong relations will endure, it is important to focus on new trends that have about during the pandemic—first, how to learn, share and exchange best practices in managing the Covid-19; second how to improve the livelihood of migrant workers, the most vulnerable group facing the pandemics.

Before I go into the details of these two new priorities, earlier, both ROK and Mekong riparian countries agreed to focus on 7 areas of cooperation: 1)culture and tourism; 2)Human Resources Developments, 3)Agriculture and rural Development, 4) infrastructure, 5) ICT, 6) Environment and 7) non-traditional security challenges. These areas are well managed by Mekong Institute, Khon Kaen University, which has been provided funding by ROK.

During the pandemic, ROK has become a global model of a successful nation which has adopted measures in fighting against the spread of coronavirus. What kind of lessons and good practices each of the riparian countries can learn from ROK and of course, from each other as well. There are commonalities and divergences. So, it is important to share these knowledge whatever they are. In the future, when these countries face another outbreak, they would know what to do in an effective ways. This pandemic will not be the last one.

Second, the Mekong region has a large number of migrant workers, especially from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. The pandemic has caused hardship for at least 6-7 million workers who move around from places to places within the region. ROK has cooperated with Mekong Institute in Khon Kaen University and other grass roots organizations in addressing this issue. Korea can do a lot to strengthening policy and legislation, building capacity of stakeholders and provide services and social safety net to migrant workers.

I would say that at this juncture, Mekong riparian countries' relationship with ROK is one of the healthiest among its major dialogue partners. Both sides do not have political or cultural barriers that have hampered their fullest cooperation. In short, they do not have a historical baggage that stirs up mistrust or misgiving. Therefore, the trajectory of Mekong-ROK in any context or pathway would be constructive. However, existing goodwill and excellent agencies on both sides should be nurtured and also serve as building blocks for more consolidated cooperation in all areas.

Finally, there is another unusual area that ROK can help the Mekong citizens, especially the young generation. ROK can serve as an incubator for future Mekong talents. Already, Thailand's LaLisa Manoban, a 23-year-old girl from Isarn Region, has made the international music history with her band, Blackpink from ROK. It is the product of joint creativity in art and music between ROK and Thailand that has created the "LaLisa phenomenon." Indeed, ROK can train and give this unique opportunity to all young aspirants in the Mekong sub-region.

*Closing Remarks*  
*Amb. Pou Sothirak*  
*Executive Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace*

From the New Southern Policy Plus to the Mekong – ROK Cooperation, President Moon Jae-in and his administration has taken a stridden initiative to engage ASEAN. In particular, the Mekong – ROK Cooperation testifies the keen interest by the government of Korea in sincerely engaging with the 5 Mekong countries as affirmed in the “Mekong-Han River Declaration for Establishing Partnership for People, Prosperity and Peace” at the First Mekong-Republic of Korea (ROK) Summit, held in Busan, South Korea, on 27 November 2019. This initiative reflects President Moon Jae-in's sincere intention to upgraded relations in 2021 with the five Mekong nations to that of strategic partners, emphasizing ROK's keen interest in meeting the development gap of the Mekong countries.

As this year marks the 10th Anniversary of Mekong-ROK Cooperation, and Cambodia and ROK are this year's Co-Chairs of Mekong-ROK partnership, this hybrid seminar is important and timely for us to review the ongoing Mekong-ROK cooperation and discuss the future prospect.

Over the past two hours, the participants of this hybrid seminar have heard insightful speeches and important presentations, especially the welcome remarks by H.E. Amb. Park Heung-Kye, Ambassador of the ROK to Cambodia and the keynote address of H.E. Pech Sokhem, Advisor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia which set the tone of today seminar.

The Mekong-ROK cooperation represents South Korean's keen determination to deepen its commitment with the five Mekong country members in a variety of ways. These comprise annual inter-governmental meetings which include Senior Officials' Meeting, Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and Summit Meeting, and public-private cooperation including the annual Mekong-ROK Business Forum and the projects funded by Mekong-ROK Cooperation Fund.

During the excellent presentation by Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Executive Director of Mekong Institute which manage the Mekong – ROK Fund, we have heard good report covering the implementation of various project under the MKCF which started since 2013 to encourage and support cooperation in seven priority areas in seven priority areas seven priority areas, including environment, agriculture and rural development, ICT, infrastructure and non-traditional security. He also emphasized the future direction of the MKCF will focus on -going efforts to contribute to on-going COVID – 19 responses, recovery and building future response resilience; strengthening results-based implementation and experience sharing; create greater synergy among MRCF funded projects; and promote capacity development in advancing policy implementation.

We also heard brilliant presentation by Mr. Park Jin-hyeok, Director of the Mekong-ROK Water Management Joint Research Center who explain in detail the focus of the Korea-Mekong Water Resources Management Collaborative Research Center (KMCRC) as the only research and technology cooperation center specializing in the water sector regarding the Mekong region in Korea, and the KMCRC is acting as a platform for R&D and technology cooperation. He also

explained the importance of water issues in the Mekong basin as well as elaborated on ongoing projects undertaken by his Center which encompassed Water Data Utilization and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region, Strategy Research on Water Industry Expansion of the Mekong River Basin and a Collaborative Platform.

During the Hybrid Seminar, we have also been privileged to hear short statements from Excellency Ambassadors of Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand who have given positive appraisal of the Mekong – Korea Cooperation and expressed their governments' appreciation to the ROK as well as provided some recommendations to enhance MKC for the future.

During session 2 have heard 3 outstanding presentations from:

- Dr. Choe Wongi, Professor in the Department of International Economy and Trade Studies, and Head of Center for ASEAN–India Studies at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA) who gave three key points regarding Republic of Korea(ROK)’s perspective on the Mekong Cooperation: (1) the maintaining and enhancing strategic autonomy and capacities of Mekong countries is the most important goal for ROK’s Mekong initiative; (2) development cooperation is the central and key area for ROK’s engagement with Mekong countries; and (3) ROK regards Mekong countries as a key economic partner from a long-term perspective.
- Dr An Pich Hatda, Chief Executive Officer, Mekong River Commission who expressed the views that the development of the Mekong’s waters contributes considerably to higher income, reduced poverty, and greater access to electricity. Nevertheless, the gains have not been equally distributed and have implications on the environment causing transboundary impacts and tensions. He acknowledged that by 2019, ROK has provided about USD 33 billion in form of Official Development Assistance to countries in the Mekong on a bilateral basis and in order to maximize effectiveness of its regional efforts, ROK has been promoting synergies with ASEAN regional integration process and other regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks. With regard to the MRC – ROK Cooperation, he holds the view that knowledge sharing programme from the ROK has brought some benefits for the MRC Member Countries to learn about advanced technologies and approaches for river basin management (Han River) and flood and drought management and forecasting. He stress that the MRC will continue to work with K-Water to fully implement the MOU that has been signed in 2019 for more benefits. He also stated that while all the projects are beneficial for the MRC, they are more ad-hoc and not formulated from a strategic perspective. To be more impactful, the Republic of Korea Government is invited to become a development partner of the MRC, and thereby contributing to realizing the agenda set by the MRC Member Countries for managing and developing the basin. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea should also play a more leading role in coordinating the support of various Korean agencies in the Mekong, in order to enhance synergies, reduce process and minimize duplication.
- Mr. Kavi Chongkittavorn, Veteran Journalist and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS – Thailand) gave his views how to further consolidate of ROK-Mekong relations. He said that although Korea is a late comer in the Mekong’s developmental scene, the country has made an impressive progress and

the ROK's success story has been an inspiration for the lower riparian countries. He mentioned that Seoul has put into good uses the New Southern Policy, which has placed focused on peace, people and prosperity which are exactly the three important elements that the Mekong people really need. He told the participants that it is important to focus on new trends in time of the outbreak of the pandemic—first, how to learn, share and exchange best practices in managing the Covid-19; second how to improve the livelihood of migrant workers, the most vulnerable group facing the pandemics. The ROK has become a global model of a successful nation which has adopted measures in fighting against the spread of coronavirus. The Mekong riparian countries can learn from ROK's best practices how to deal with Covid-19. He mentioned that the Mekong riparian countries' relationship with ROK is one of the healthiest among its major dialogue partners as both sides do not have political or cultural barriers that have hampered their fullest cooperation. He urged both sides to capitalize on the existing goodwill and excellent agencies to nurture and cultivate the building blocks for more consolidated cooperation in all areas. Lastly he mentioned that the ROK can serve as an incubator for future Mekong talents by offering training program for young generation of Mekong citizen to embrace ROK's soft power such as K-pop.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention again that although visible progress has been achieved, both the ROK and the five Mekong countries must address ongoing challenges regarding water resource management of the mighty Mekong River to avoid the conflicting of interest between and among the Mekong countries and extra-regional powers. He called for an equitable sharing of the cost benefits when in come to the exploitation of natural resource of the Mekong River with rights and responsibility of all riparian communities. Within a spectrum of an ever-increasing number of initiatives and mechanisms where external powers engage Mekong countries, there must be an appropriate coordination mechanism to manage unintended friction among states and conflicts that may arrive threaten peace and security of this region. He stress the importance of a collaboration process among all the partners with the five Mekong countries to be based on an acceptable scheme of coordination and evaluation that can accommodate the variation in the design and implementation of all projects in accordance with respective mechanisms' strength and agendas. Any Mekong mechanism must inspire a vital institution that could add up what other existing mechanisms are not able to achieve. All development partners must be willingness to work with other existing mechanism setting out an excellent example for other mechanisms to follow so as to provide greater synergy to the development needs of the five Mekong countries.

In closing, I would like to express CICP's sincere appreciation to H.E. Dr. Pech Sokhem, Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia and to H.E. Park Heung-kyeong, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Cambodia for jointly host this important and timely hybrid seminar. My appreciation also goes to all the distinguished speakers and moderator. Lastly, I would also like to thank all participants who have taken their valuable to attend this event.





