

***MRC Regional Workshop on Discharge and Sediment Monitoring and
Geomorphological Tools for the Lower-Mekong Basin
21 October 2008, MRCS, Lao PDR***

Welcome and Opening Remark
by
Director Te Navuth

Distinguished Delegates
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all, to this Regional Workshop on Discharge and Sediment Monitoring and Geomorphological Tools for the Lower-Mekong Basin. Discharge and sediment monitoring is an activity under the Information and Knowledge Management programme (IKMP) under the Technical Support Division of Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRCS).

Component 2 of IKMP is assigned to implement the Discharge and Sediment Monitoring Project. The Component has a mandate to ensure that required hydro-meteorological data is acquired, processed, made available and integrated into the Knowledge Base. The major task for hydro-meteorological data collection and management is the collection and supply of improved quality, quantity and timely hydro-meteorological information to all MRC programmes for model improvement, forecasting and monitoring, and for assessing development scenarios.

This project is now under formulation and aims to improve our understanding of the sediment balance and sediment transport processes in the mainstream and tributaries of the Mekong River Basin. Sediment monitoring is planned to be integrated into an MRC integrated monitoring system for river discharge, sediment, water quality and biological monitoring. Monitoring data and derived knowledge are required for the implementation of MRC Programmes and planning of national water resource developments. The acquired information and knowledge will be useful for studies related to various sectors, which include river morphology and bank protection, sediment transport and nutrient loads, water quality and environment, raw water supply and intake, hydropower and water resource development, navigation, agricultural and fishery productivity and coastal sedimentation processes. A comprehensive discharge and sediment monitoring plan is currently being drafted. The monitoring activity would work in synergy with the hydrographical and water quality measurements.

During August, September and October 2008, MRCS staff made field visits to several existing hydrographic stations in the four riparian countries where discharge measurements and sediment sampling are being conducted. The purpose of the site visits was to evaluate the present status of discharge and sediment monitoring activities,

including what methods and equipment are used. The outcomes of the visits are quite satisfactory. In relation to these site visits, I would like to thank all related agencies for your cooperation, inputs and contributions.

To make sure all challenging issues are addressed, the agenda for this workshop places an emphasis on tools for monitoring river discharge and sediment transport. Secondly the workshop will address specific issues such as the possible consequences of hydropower development on sediment loads and river morphology, and how dams can be best designed to prevent and mitigate negative effects. We will also hear from modelling experts about tools that can be used for predicting the consequences of land-use change and water resource development on sediment loads in rivers and river morphology. Finally, we will discuss ideas of integrating discharge and sediment monitoring with other existing MRC activities including water-quality and biological monitoring. We will have expert presentations about the benefits and potential applications of data from an integrated monitoring network. The discussions on each of these topics is expected to provide useful information and ideas for the formulation of the MRC discharge and sediment monitoring project, and needs for capacity building.

The participants of this workshop include representatives from relevant governmental agencies, each of the MRC Programmes and experts in river morphology, sediment transport and discharge measurements and dam design. We reflect the range of people who will be the future users of discharge and sediment data and equipment. Our joint contributions will provide this meeting with a comprehensive overview and discussion on how we collect and use data, conduct measurements and operate and maintain equipment, both at present and in the years ahead. This will not only provide guidance to the MRC-Discharge and Sediment Monitoring Project, but will also help us plan and coordinate other activities under the MRC framework.

I feel confident that with the expertise gathered here, this meeting can address all challenging issues and state a clear way forward. The success of the Discharge and Sediment Monitoring Project formulation relies on your support and contribution of related knowledge and experiences.

In conclusion, I once again warmly welcome you to this important meeting. I wish you a productive two days of discussion, and I look forward to hearing the outcomes.

I am sure that the spirit of co-operation will ensure success, and the development of a clear and positive set of recommendations for future consideration.

It is now the time for starting this workshop. I, therefore, would like to declare the opening of this regional workshop.

Good morning and thank you for your kind attention.