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Foreword

The Proceedings of the 6th Technical Symposium of the MRC Fisheries Programme have been collated to serve a number of important purposes. They provide a vehicle for young scientists to publish the results of their work; they form a permanent record for future workers to refer to; and they assist in communicating the importance of the fisheries resources in this region to decision makers and the public.

Communication must be considered a key element in any development activity, particularly one dealing with natural resources that are subject to many competing uses. This is the case with the resources of the Mekong. The Mekong's waters are used for hydropower, irrigation, navigation and fisheries; its wetlands are used for production of fish, timber products and agriculture; and its ecosystem supports biodiversity and the livelihoods of millions of people. The fishing industry is just one component of the myriad of uses of the Mekong, but a very important one. To ensure that fisheries are appropriately considered in planning processes, it is essential that fisheries workers make available information on this resource and its role in the lives of riparian people. Such information must take many forms, to ensure that we reach all levels of government and society. In this regard, I appreciate these Proceedings, as they document and present much of the data that underpin arguments on the importance of fisheries in the Lower Mekong Basin.

The range of papers presented in the Proceedings indicates the scope of work being undertaken by the Fisheries Programme, as well as the technical capacity within the region. I am pleased to see in this issue more papers from fisheries researchers not directly associated with the MRC Fisheries Programme. This indicates both the importance of the Symposium within the region, and the growing interaction between agencies associated with management of the natural resources of the Mekong. Such interaction is essential if we are to make the best use of the human and financial resources we have for developing the fisheries of the Mekong.

I hope these Proceedings engender pride among those who have participated in and contributed to the 6th Technical Symposium. Fisheries remain a critical element of any multidisciplinary approach to development in the Mekong. The continued collection, development and distribution of knowledge in the area of fisheries will playa vital role in meeting the needs and keeping the balance of the Mekong River basin, now and in the future.

Dr Olivier Cogels
Chief Executive Officer
Mekong River Commission Secretariat
September 2004

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