

**International Dialogue:
"Water, Happiness and Conscious Cooperation for the Peaceful and Prosperous Mekong River Basin"
Monday, 21 March 2022, 14h00 – 16h00, Bangkok time**

**Celebrating the International Day of Happiness '20 Mar 2022' and
the World Water Day '22 Mar 2022'**

Opening Address by Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, Mekong Institute

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sauwalak Kittiprapas and Khun Apichai Sunchindah, Chair and Vice Chair of International Research Associates for Happy Society (IRAH),
Dr. Poramettee Vimolsiri, IRAH Honorary Advisor,
Distinguish Guests and Speakers,
Audience, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, allow me to extend my heartfelt thanks to IRAH for inviting the Mekong Institute to join this Dialogue in celebrating the International Day of Happiness and the World Water Day 2022.

I wish to also take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Anoulak Kittikhoun for recently assuming the CEO of MRC. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you and MRC in strengthening cooperation synergies in the sustainable development of Mekong River Basin.

Mekong Institute or MI is an intergovernmental organization founded and represented by the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), namely Cambodia, P.R. China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. MI is mandated to promote capacity development for regional cooperation and integration. Key thematic areas include agricultural development and commercialization, trade and investment facilitation, and sustainable energy and environment, while addressing cross-cutting issues of social inclusion and vulnerability, digital economy and innovation, and labor mobility.

Through this mandate, MI works in support of implementing UN Agenda 2030, GMS Strategic Framework 2030 and other Mekong related cooperation frameworks with the view to accelerate sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation towards a more harmonious, prosperous, and equitable GMS.

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, water is life, all forms of life. This is particularly true for the GMS. And happy lives require that the development and cooperation in the region is progressively promoted while maintaining functionality of the Mekong River basin. These complex interlinkages between water and people are therefore a major consideration in the pursuit of sustainable development in the region.

Against this background, MI promotes capacity development towards green, inclusive and sustainable economy while also contributes to effective water resources management targeting relevant decision makers and stakeholders. These are, for instance,

- improving the capacity of local stakeholders in small-scale water resources management; and

- evidence-based policy recommendations on improving transboundary cooperation and infrastructure development

For this year's celebration of the World Water Day, we will be having the Mekong-India Forum tomorrow, with the theme "Engaging Youth in Water Resources Conservation and Management".

Colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, if the whole Mekong River system will not function properly, the whole GMS region will malfunction too. As an institution tasked to equip our people with the appropriate set of capacities, we want to develop more people who will lead in making a well-functioning society that will provide an enabling environment for a more sustainable development in the region. Together with our development partners, we will continue to implement programs and activities, whether in the areas of sustainable food systems, green economy and manufacturing, and clean energy, that will help in unfolding human potentials for a better quality of life.

I would like congratulate and thank IRAH for organizing this event. This a good platform to strengthen partnerships in addressing the multidimensional issues related to water and water resources management in the Mekong River basin. It is important to remind ourselves of the complex interlinkages between our happiness and our precious water resources.

As the happiness and prosperity of the region relies on water in the Mekong River basin, we should continue to work in increasing understanding among people, most especially our government, industries, and sectoral leaders, of the interdependence of humans, water and our environment. We have to instill to everyone's minds that the decisions we are making today, including what we will do in the Mekong River basin, will determine not only our own personal health and happiness, but the whole society's well-being tomorrow.

Thank you for your kind attention.