

**Message of H.E. Prak Sokhonn,
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International
Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia
on the occasion of the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Week 2019**



For the second year in a row, I take great pleasure to share my personal message on the occasion of the celebration of the annual Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Week “MLC Week 2019”. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, let me foremost extend my best wishes of happiness and prosperity to the peoples of the Mekong-Lancang member countries.

Cambodia, like the other 5 MLC countries, takes great pride in being able to build together this “*Community of Shared Future of Peace and Prosperity*.” When all the Leaders held their First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders’ Meeting in the beautiful city of Sanya, Hainan Island, China on 23 March 2016, they believed that this new cooperation mechanism, with its top-level political commitment, will grow from strength to strength over the years to come.

Cambodia was honored to drive this vision during its co-chairmanship of the 2nd MLC Leaders' Meeting in January 2018 in Phnom Penh. Together, we built on the past momentum and adopted the "*Phnom Penh Declaration*" and the "*Five-Year Plan of Action on the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (2018-2022)*". These two policy instruments have provided us with a clear-sighted approach to take the MLC forward from its nurturing phase into the next growth stage.

For those of us living and working in the Mekong region, we can surely appreciate the region's strategic location, its diverse economic strength, its rich traditions, cultures and local values, its religious and interfaith diversity. All of these characteristics combined offers enormous resources potentials and economic strengths that can, and should, be harnessed for the collective benefits of the MLC countries and their people.

I believe that the Mekong region can offer more than its own weight. It is an integral part of the ASEAN Community and even one of the global growth centers. Building on an open regional integration and a staunch multilateralism policy, the Mekong region can accelerate its efforts to narrow the development gap to build a strong ASEAN Community, where each country, driven by a win-win cooperation spirit, interacts with each other to promote a dialogue for peace, cooperation and sustainable development for the Mekong region as a whole. With that unified strength, the MLC could serve as a useful complement to the larger ASEAN-China Cooperation framework.

In such a short timeframe, the MLC has put in place various implementing mechanisms to support and deliver on the Leaders' vision. At the technical level, we have several Joint Working Groups on Key Priority Areas; we have established important institutions like a Water Resources Cooperation Center, an Environmental Cooperation Center, and the Global Center for Mekong Studies. In my ministry, we have established a MLC National Secretariat to coordinate all the works with various government institutions.

At the 4th MLC Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Luang Prabang in December 2018, we have agreed to concretize the joint building of a MLC Economic Development Belt so that we can enhance our production capacity cooperation. Cambodia has also suggested that there be a study to explore the possibility to establish an international MLC Secretariat, which can ensure effective and efficient coordination amongst all MLC member countries.

Cambodia is very appreciative of China's LMC Special Fund of USD 300 million launched in 2016. The fund, earmarked for a five years period, is currently being used to support small and medium scale soft cooperation projects by all MLC member countries, the outcomes of which, I am certain, will bring tangible benefits for the people in the Mekong region. Among those projects, Cambodia has received a total of 35 projects, worth approximately 14 million USD, to support the development of soft

infrastructure, knowledge and experiences sharing, people-to-people exchanges, and independent research projects.

Cambodia is proud of its active role in the MLC from the very beginning and we are as committed as ever to see that this initiative continue to be relevant to Cambodia and to the Mekong region, in particular at a time when we are consolidating our region into a region of peace, sustainable development and shared prosperity.
