

Supporting the Lower Mekong Basin countries with the transboundary management of water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity

DEEPLY CONCERNED that the Lower Mekong Basin faces great challenges because of its vulnerability to human and naturally induced changes in the context of economic development, climate change and sea-level rise, causing more extreme weather and affecting people's livelihoods;

CONCERNED that the harmful consequences of regional economic development in which the construction of hydroelectric power plants and the diversion of water from upstream of the Mekong Delta cause changes to the flow, increased salinisation, and reduced sediment and fisheries resources, which results in negative impacts on regional socio-economic development;

CONCERNED that other negative impacts include environmental pollution, serious ecological imbalance and overuse of groundwater, while over-extraction of sand, and construction and infrastructure along rivers and canals increase the rate of river erosion and the risk of disasters;

STRESSING SUPPORT for the strategic development orientation of the Lower Mekong Basin;

RECOGNISING that people need to live with and adapt to climate change and sea-level rise, and can turn these challenges into opportunities by proactively living with floods, droughts and salinity;

FURTHER RECOGNISING that water resources should be the core factor, the basis for developing strategies and policies, and regional development master planning, and that there is a need for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) of the entire river basin, and that brackish water and saline water are also resources to be accounted for and exploited, alongside freshwater; and

STRESSING that strengthening the management and efficient use of water and land resources and other resources in the Mekong Delta necessarily requires recognition that these resources are transboundary in nature, that cooperation with upstream countries is also necessary for the sustainable development of the Mekong Delta, and that initiatives that promote the transboundary management of water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity are therefore needed;

The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. REQUESTS the Director General to:

- a. work proactively with all relevant stakeholders to strengthen partnerships within the Lower Mekong Basin countries;
- b. advance understanding, knowledge and learning to better conserve and sustainably manage water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity; and
- c. advocate for appropriate policy changes at national and regional levels, such as transboundary management of water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity, to enhance sound ecosystem stewardship;

2. CALLS ON the Director General, Commissions and Members to:

- a. advocate for increased sustainability use of water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity between Lower Mekong Basin countries;
- b. contribute to initiatives and cooperation frameworks aimed at reducing the negative impacts of regional economic development on biodiversity and environment; and
- c. raise awareness concerning unsustainable socio-economic development and the overuse of groundwater in the Mekong Delta; and

3. URGES governments, civil society, development partners, the private sector and the media to recognise the importance of the transboundary management of water resources, ecosystems and biodiversity and to:

- a. work to ensure new developments commit and adhere to international standards for Environmental Impact Assessments, and that Strategic Environmental Assessments include said new developments; and
- b. actively look for alternatives to new dams that will reduce the impact on the Mekong River's ecosystems, including changes to river flows, increased salinisation, and reduced sediment and fisheries resources.