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## MEKONG PUBLIC FORUM

### **The Mekong Under Threat: Protecting People, Ecosystems in a Fast-changing Basin**

*Can Tho City, 20 March 2018*

#### **Overview**

The Mekong is one of the largest and most biodiverse river systems in the world. It nurtures a fertile basin and delta, which creates the largest rice export area in the region and the richest inland fishery globally. The Lower Mekong basin is home to over 60 million people, of whom about 85% are farmers and fishermen. Rice farming, fishing, and aquaculture are fundamentally important sources of livelihood for riparian communities, in addition to other services and auxiliary industries.

The Mekong basin is one of the areas of the world most threatened by climate change. In the basin countries, ecosystem changes and threats to biodiversity resulting from climate change are already affecting people's livelihoods, which in turn will have a significant impact on the sustainable development of the region. In addition, the basin is facing enormous environmental changes due to river development activities, particularly the construction of hydropower dams on the Mekong mainstream and within the basin. Currently, in addition to seven operational mainstream dams on the upstream part of the river in China, 11 dams are under construction or planned for the Lower Mekong Basin in Laos and Cambodia, with over a hundred more built or planned on Mekong tributaries. These dams are predicted to cause extremely serious damage to Mekong ecosystems. They will drastically reduce sediment transport, destroy aquatic resources and biodiversity, and lower water quality, profoundly altering these and other important values of the river.

Due to the impacts of climate change and human activities, the Mekong basin is facing significant challenges in adaptation and maintaining development objectives. This will pose great risks and difficulties for riparian countries in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially with respect to goals of alleviating poverty, eliminating hunger, reducing inequality, promoting responsible use of natural resources, and climate action.

To facilitate a public platform for exchanging information and perspectives on existing challenges for the Mekong basin, International Rivers, PanNature, Mekong Environment Forum, and Save the Mekong Coalition co-organize the forum "***The Mekong Under Threat: Protecting People and Ecosystems in a Fast-Changing Basin.***" This event aims to provide space for community representatives from Lower Mekong basin countries to share their views on changes to the river ecosystems, impacts on their livelihoods and everyday life, as well as express their concerns and recommendations to policy-makers in the region. On the other

hand, relevant agencies and scientists will join the forum to respond to voices of local communities and share their perspectives on impacts of climate change and hydropower development on the Mekong basin. Forum discussions will include alternatives for energy demand and proposals for ways toward sustainable and fair development at basin-scale for countries to realize UN SDGs.

**Venue:** Ninh Kieu Hotel, No 2, Hai Ba Trung street, Tan An ward, Ninh Kieu district, Can Tho city, Viet Nam.

## Agenda

Time	Contents
8:00	Registration
8:30	Welcoming remarks and forum opening
8:45	Basin-wide Community Panel: representatives from communities along the River in Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam (10 minutes each) address environmental changes and ask questions of policy makers  <i>Facilitator: Maureen Harris, International Rivers</i>
9:45	Coffee Break
10:00	MRC Council Study on impacts of hydropower development and responses to questions, concerns from local communities <i>Dr. Naruepon Sukumasavin, MRCS</i>  Dams and climate change: impacts in the context of implementing UN SDGs <i>Dr. Le Viet Phu, Lower Mekong Public Policy Initiative (LMPPI), Fulbright University Vietnam</i>  <i>Facilitator: Trinh Le Nguyen, PanNature</i>
10:45 am	Comments from representatives of participating organizations  Questions and discussions  <i>Facilitator: Trinh Le Nguyen, PanNature</i>
12:00	Lunch break
<b>Facing the New Context</b>	
13:00	Mekong youth interactive forum theatre presentation  <i>Facilitator: Vu Hai Linh, WARECOD</i>
13:45	Community experience of changes to ecosystems and loss of livelihoods in the Mekong Delta <i>Community representative from the Vietnam Delta</i>  The Mekong Delta under the impacts of climate change and upstream dams <i>Dr. Duong Van Ni, Can Tho University</i>  <i>Facilitator: Nguyen Minh Quang, MEF</i>
14:30	Questions and answers, discussion
15:00	Coffee break

15:15	Alternative visions for the Mekong Delta and the basin – national and regional regional energy development <i>Mr. Tran Dinh Sinh, GreenID</i>  The SDGs and public participation <i>Ms. Nguyen Thi Hong Van, Vietnam Rivers Network</i>  <i>Facilitator: Representative from Save the Mekong Coalition</i>
16:00	Questions and answers, discussion  <i>Facilitator: Representative from Save the Mekong Coalition</i>
16:30	Statement addressing SDGs, community initiatives, calls for action from community representatives <i>Community representatives</i>
17:00	Forum closing <i>Co-organizers</i>
18:00 pm	Diner on the boat at Ninh Kieu Port

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## ABOUT FORUM CO-ORGANIZERS

**International Rivers** protects rivers and defends the rights of communities that depend on them. We work to stop destructive dams and promote water and energy solutions for a just and sustainable world. Website: [www.internationalrivers.org](http://www.internationalrivers.org)

**PanNature** is a Vietnamese not-for-profit organization dedicated to protecting and conserving diversity of life and improving human well-being in Vietnam by seeking, promoting and implementing feasible, nature-friendly solutions to important environmental problems and sustainable development issues. Website: [www.nature.org.vn/en](http://www.nature.org.vn/en)

**Save the Mekong Coalition** is an open network of non-government organizations, community groups, academics, artists and ordinary citizens within the Mekong region and internationally, anyone who shares concerns regarding the future of one of the world's greatest river systems. Website: <https://savethemekong.org>

**Mekong Environment Forum** is an independent organization working to protect Mekong Delta's ecosystems and support the rights of communities who depend on them. We work to prevent destructive projects and shape policies that will contribute to building a more sustainable and safer Mekong Delta. Website: [www.mekongenvironmentforum.org](http://www.mekongenvironmentforum.org)