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## **National Mekong Committee urged to take people-centered role on Mekong mainstream dams**

**Yesterday** (1<sup>st</sup> December), on the final day of the Mekong River Commission's (MRC) call for public submissions to its Strategic Environmental Assessment on the Mekong mainstream dams, **the Save the Mekong Coalition** sent a letter to the Chairpersons of the National Mekong Committees (NMCs) of Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, urging for a strong and trusted consultative process at the national and local level on development options for the river, which guarantees the participation of all riparian communities who would be affected by the eleven dams proposed on the lower Mekong mainstream.

The letter, copied to the MRC Secretariat and its donors, presents to the NMC Chairpersons the 23,110 signature "Save the Mekong" postcard petition, gathered by civil society groups in the Mekong region and around the world since March 2009. The "Save the Mekong" postcard petition was sent to the Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2009, requesting all the Prime Ministers, as well as the NMC Chairpersons and international donors, to listen to the voice of the Mekong People and keep the Mekong flowing freely of dams, while also considering more sustainable ways to meet the region's electricity needs that avoid creating cross-border impacts and disputes.

**"Mekong mainstream dams threaten serious social and environmental impacts, and to undermine regional food security, economy and existing efforts to alleviate poverty and meet Millennium Development Goals"** the letter states.

Additionally, the letter to the NMCs emphasizes the absence of strong national and local level processes as a barrier to the MRC's assessment, by stating that **"the MRC Secretariat has failed to listen and respond to peoples' requests and kept the assessment process on Mekong mainstream dams separate from the actual realities on the ground."**

The letter requests that the Chairpersons of the NMCs, as the ministerial-level members of the MRC, incorporate the 23,110 signatures and their individual requests into processes initiated by their own governments and the MRC as they deem appropriate, thus improving processes at both the national and regional level on the mainstream dams. The coalition also asks them to act as key catalysts in urging for the release of all reports to the public regarding Mekong mainstream dams written by the MRC and project developers, and finally, asks for the NMCs to facilitate full public consultation with riparian communities in their own respective countries on the Mekong River's development and the proposed Mekong mainstream dams.

Until now, reports prepared by the MRC on the proposed Don Sahong dam, the mainstream dam at the most advanced stage of development on the Mekong mainstream in Southern Laos, haven't been released to the public, despite requests for the last two years. The Malaysian project developer, Mega First Corporation Berhad, has also not released any project documents to the public.

**The Save the Mekong coalition** is a network of non-government organizations, community groups, academics, journalists, artists, fishers, farmers and ordinary people from within the Mekong countries and internationally. For more information on the coalition and the impacts of the planned Mekong mainstream dams in English and regional languages, please visit: [www.SavetheMekong.org](http://www.SavetheMekong.org).

For more information, please contact:

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