



19 October 2009

Your Excellency Bouasone Bouphavanh,

Re: Proposed dams on the Mekong River's mainstream and delivery of 23,110 signature petition

On behalf of the Save the Mekong coalition and the signatories of our postcard campaign, we would like to present to Your Excellency a 23,110 signature petition that kindly requests Your Excellency's help in protecting the lower Mekong River from hydropower dams proposed for the river's mainstream.

The petition was signed by 15,282 people from within the Mekong region, including 352 people from China, 30 from Burma, 616 from Laos, 7,797 from Thailand, 2,682 from Cambodia and 3,805 from Vietnam. Many of these signatories live alongside the Mekong River. The remaining 7,828 signatures came from people from fifty countries around the world.

Please find enclosed a copy of a DVD containing scans of the postcards and online petition signatures, along with other supporting materials.

Of the eleven dams proposed for the Mekong mainstream, seven are located in Lao PDR, two are planned for the Thailand-Lao PDR border and two are in Cambodia. Electricity from these dams will largely supply Thailand and, to a lesser extent, Vietnam.

The Mekong River is host to the world's most productive inland fishery. The commercial fish catch is currently worth up to US\$3 billion annually and contributes to the livelihoods of many of the region's poorest families. The river's fisheries provide four fifths of consumed animal protein in Cambodia, and in Laos contribute an average of forty percent, and in some provinces up to ninety percent of consumed animal protein.

By building dams on the river's mainstream, vital fish migration routes will be blocked. A group of the world's top fisheries experts have stated that there is no technology in existence that can mitigate the impacts these dams would cause to fisheries. These dams threaten serious social and environmental impacts and to undermine regional food security, economy and existing efforts to alleviate poverty and meet the Millennium Development Goals.

The hydrological and ecological changes caused by Mekong mainstream dams will cause a decline of the Mekong River's great symbolic species, including the Mekong Giant Catfish and Irrawaddy Dolphins. These dams will also block the movement of sediments carried by the river that presently nourish the delta's soils and rebuild land

lost to coastal erosion in Vietnam, thus threatening Vietnam's "rice bowl" where fifty percent of the country's rice-paddy crop and fifty five percent of the national fisheries and fruit crop is harvested.

Given all these changes, the Mekong mainstream dams are likely to create serious cross border conflict between the dams' proponents and the region's people who rely on the river as a source of livelihood, and among local people who will be competing for the river's diminishing resources.

The Save the Mekong coalition is a network of non-governmental organizations, community groups, academics, journalists, artists, lawyers, fishers, farmers and ordinary people from within the Mekong countries and internationally.

On 18 June 2009, representatives from the Save the Mekong coalition were honored to have the opportunity to meet H.E Abhisit Vejjajiva, Prime Minister of Thailand. We were pleased to learn of H.E Abhisit Vejjajiva's recognition that the Mekong River is an important transboundary river, requiring cross-border cooperation, and the important role that regional forums such as the Mekong River Commission, Greater Mekong Subregion program and ASEAN should play in facilitating constructive dialogue on these important issues of concern.

In order to protect the natural wealth of the Mekong River, ensure sustainable economic growth, protect food security and promote regional peace and prosperity, we believe there are feasible, sustainable and economical ways to meet the Mekong region's energy needs through improving energy efficiency and deploying recent innovations in decentralized and renewable energy technologies. National policy reform may also help promote and encourage investment in these new energy technologies.

We strongly feel that the governments of the Mekong region can and should take the lead in demonstrating to the world that economic growth, social harmony, and environmental sustainability can co-exist in balance, thus minimizing future economic, climate change and environmental risks.

Thank you for your time and attention. As an important and influential leader in the Mekong region, we would be greatly honored if Your Excellency would kindly grant us the opportunity to discuss with you our concerns about the Mekong mainstream dam plans and the importance of having a healthy free-flowing Mekong River.

Please, Your Excellency, accept our best consideration and highest esteem.

Yours Sincerely,

The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF), Cambodia
Sesan-Srepok-Sekong Rivers Protection Network (3SPN), Cambodia
Conservation and Development on Cambodia (CDCam), Cambodia

Towards Ecological Recovery and Regional Alliance (TERRA), Thailand
Thai People's Network for Mekong, Thailand
Living Rivers Siam (SEARIN), Thailand
Palang Thai, Thailand

Salween Watch Coalition, Thailand
Focus on the Global South, Thailand
Center for Water Resources Conservation and Development (WARECOD), Vietnam
People and Nature Reconciliation (PanNature), Vietnam
Burma Rivers Network, Burma
China Development Brief, China
Manna Gum, Australia
Mekong Monitor Tasmania, Australia
Probe International, Canada
Mekong Watch, Japan
Both ENDS, The Netherlands
Association for International Water Studies (FIVAS), Norway
The Corner House, UK
World Rainforest Movement (WRM), Uruguay
EarthRights International, USA
International Rivers, USA
The Mangrove Action Project (MAP), USA
Bank Information Center (BIC), USA

Copy To:

Your Excellency Samdech Akkak Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen,
The Prime Minister of Cambodia
Your Excellency Nguyễn Tấn Dũng,
The Prime Minister of Vietnam
Your Excellency Abhisit Vejjajiva,
The Prime Minister of Thailand

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