



Mekong River Commission

P.O. Box 6101, Vientiane 01000, Lao PDR
Telephone: (856-21) 263 263 Facsimile: (856-21) 263 264
Email: mrcs@mrcmekong.org Website: www.mrcmekong.org



PRESS RELEASE

MRC No. 10/06

Denmark provides US\$9 million for MRC's Basin Development Plan and Environment Programme

Vientiane, Lao PDR
6th December 2006

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) and the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark today signed an agreement worth 52.5 million Danish Kroner (around \$US9 million) to fund the second phase of the MRC's Basin Development Plan (BDP2) and to continue the work of the Environment Programme.

The new funding agreement was signed by H.E. Mr Peter Lysholt Hansen, Ambassador of Denmark to Viet Nam and Dr Olivier Cogels, Chief Executive Officer MRC Secretariat at the MRC Secretariat headquarters in Vientiane. Under the terms of the grant 45 million Danish Kroner (DKK) will go to the BDP2, while 7.5 million DKK will go to the MRC's Environment Programme. The grant will extend to 2010.

Both the BDP and the Environment Programme are both programmes which were called for in the 1995 Agreement on Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin, which formed the MRC.

The BDP2 programme will formulate a joint development rolling plan which takes a basin wide perspective of shared water and related resources and aims to manage and develop them in an integrated, sustainable and equitable manner for the mutual benefit of the MRC's member countries.

In its second phase the BDP will also further develop its established knowledge base and its assessment tools and see these used effectively both within the MRC and the National Mekong Committees (NMCs). It will also build capacity at MRC and NMC levels for integrated water resources management (IWRM) planning.

Using a range of powerful mathematical models the MRC will analyse benefits and impacts of a range of combined hydropower and irrigation developments to enable member countries to work out the trade-offs which are acceptable for all concerned and enable them to mobilise water resources for drought management, irrigation, and flood management. The BDP will also develop, prioritise and promote a portfolio of programmes and projects which can be implemented in the member countries.

The role of the Environment Programme is to achieve a balance between economic development and protection of the environment to ensure a healthy Mekong River basin and it will use the Danish funds to expand its work in providing data on the status of changes in water sediment quality, aquatic ecosystems and social and economic conditions. It will establish an appropriate basin-wide environmental monitoring system and continue its work toward encouraging joint and sustainable development thus avoiding any transboundary issues.

The programme's aim is to ensure there is sustainability in water resources development and in order to achieve this it will spend time valuing aquatic ecosystems and natural resources, identifying areas where people are highly dependent on aquatic ecosystem productivity and develop conceptual models of the Mekong River basin's aquatic ecosystems. It will support and facilitate research and related undertakings, aimed at increasing the understanding of functions and linkages of the Mekong River Basin's ecosystems and communicate this to planners, managers, policy/decision makers and relevant stakeholders.

It will also develop a methodology for environmental flows assessment in the Mekong River basin and provide scientific data and information on the relationship between flow regimes (quantity and quality) and environmental assets in the Mekong River basin.

The programme also plans to improve capacity in all areas of environmental monitoring and analysis, environmental flow assessment and to increase awareness and participation among government staff, decision-makers and relevant stakeholders of new environmental concepts, techniques and tools.

Dr Olivier Cogels, Chief Executive Officer of the MRC Secretariat, thanked the Danish Government for its continued generous support for the work of the MRC and explained how the Basin Development Plan formed an integral part of the MRC's Strategic Plan 2006-2010.

“The MRC's new Strategic Plan 2006-2010, is all about promoting the use of the river's potential for sustainable development and economic growth. But we want to be sure it is the right kind of development. Sustainable development that is equitable, carefully planned, that minimises environmental impacts and, most importantly, is for the benefit of all of the people of the basin,” he said. “The MRC aims to promote and support coordinated, sustainable, and pro-poor development through joint planning and the development of a common basin development plan, and with the support of the Danish government, we are confident we will achieve this goal.”

H.E. Peter Lysholt Hansen, Ambassador, Embassy of Denmark in Hanoi stated: “The Mekong River Basin is a resource of great importance to the livelihoods of millions of poor people in the region. It is vital that this resource is protected and its sustainable development carefully planned to allow it to continue to generate benefits to all the people in the Basin, not least the poor. The MRC has a key role to play in safeguarding the river's sustainable development. Denmark, which is currently the largest bilateral donor to the MRC programmes including now also the BDP2, is pleased to support the MRC and its Member Countries in these efforts.”

- **For more information, please contact: Virginia Addison, Communications Officer, Tel: 856 21 263 263 Ext 1122. Mobile: (856) 20 559 9139 Fax: (856-21) 263 264 Email: virginia@mrcmekong.org**