

MRC launches projects to better manage Mekong basin resources

Times Reporters

The Mekong River Commission (MRC) has reaffirmed its commitment to two joint projects between Cambodia and Laos, and Cambodia and Thailand to better manage the Mekong basin resources and address flood and drought issues.

The projects were outlined during a kick-off meeting held in Vientiane on Wednesday.

Running for an initial one-year period from April 2018 to March 2019, the two projects are among the five which were developed using the current Basin Development Strategy and which were identified and agreed to in National Indicative Plans.

The member countries will use the projects to promote cross-border cooperation in water resources planning and management to create mutual benefits.

The projects are supported by the German government through Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) with a focus on transboundary development planning of water resources management in the Khone Falls region between Cambodia and Laos, including the monitoring of environmental impacts from the Don Sahong hydropower scheme.



Mr Pham Tuan Phan (left) addresses the kick-off meeting on Wednesday. --Photo MRC

The joint projects also focus on joint assessment and planning for flood and drought management in the border areas of Cambodia and Thailand, which suffer from frequent flooding.

"We're pleased that these projects have attracted funding support and will now be implemented," the MRC's Chief Executive Officer Mr Pham Tuan Phan said during the meeting.

"These projects are expected to lead to joint investment in improving water security and supporting economic and social development in the project transboundary areas and beyond."

GIZ has been a long-standing development partner of the Commission, actively providing support to the organisation in many areas, including integrated water resources management, flood mitigation, climate change,

sustainable hydropower, institutional reform and gender mainstreaming.

"Germany has placed importance on the implementation of MRC-facilitated transboundary projects that have the potential to inspire increased cooperation between and among the Commission member countries," MRC-GIZ Cooperation Programme Director Mr Bertrand Meinier said.

From 2013 to 2016, the Commission Secretariat under the former Basin Development Plan programme facilitated various discussions among the member countries, based on the review of Commission assessments and national plans, when developing these joint projects.

The kick-off meeting also discussed implementation arrangements for the projects, including the structure of governance.