

Mekong Forum 2023: “Driving Transformative Change in the GMS”

July 27, 2023

Kunming Kai Wah Plaza Hotel, Kunming City, Yunnan Province, P.R. China

Introductory Remarks by Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn

Executive Director, Mekong Institute

Mr. **Zhao Chenggang**, Minister Counsellor, Department of Asian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P.R. China;

Mr. **Chen Rongjie**, Deputy Director General of Foreign Affairs Office of the People’s Government of Yunnan Province;

Dr. **Narongchai Akrasanee**, Chairman of Mekong Institute’s Steering Committee;

Excellencies, distinguished members of MI Governing Board;

Distinguished guests and speakers;

Representatives from the development partners;

Participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Cordial welcome and greetings from the organizing committee of the Mekong Forum 2023!

Mekong Institute is an **inter-governmental organization** established by the GMS countries with **the mandate** to promote capacity development to support regional cooperation and integration. Our current **focal areas** include trade and investment, agriculture and food, sustainable energy, environment, social inclusion, labor mobility and digital economy.

Mekong Forum is an important **annual flagship** event that MI has organized since 2011 with the aim to provide a multi-stakeholder platform to discuss important issues that matter the development and cooperation in the GMS.

This year, Mekong Forum is held with the theme “**Driving Transformative Change in the GMS**”, which will discuss on the transformative potential in driving sustainable economic growth and reclaiming its position as a growth center. The theme was **conceived** in response to the need for GMS in **navigating** an ever-changing and dynamic landscape as well as withstanding the challenges posed by the rise in inflation, global supply chain shocks, high energy, and production costs. These are compounded by the far-reaching effects of climate change. In light of these complexities, there is **an urgent call** for **strengthened regional cooperation** that can drive transformative growth in the region as well as **advance the shared vision** guided by the Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Development Initiative.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

This year’s Mekong Forum is particularly unique for a few reasons. The first is for the first time that Mekong Institute organizes the Forum **outside Thailand and in P.R. China**. And the second is the on-going **Mid-term Review** process of MI’s Strategic Plan 2021-2025, of which the outcome of this Forum will form a basis to refine MI’s activities in the remaining period of the Strategic Plan.

The Forum will comprise the **plenary session** in the morning, providing views and perspectives from the thought leaders and a brief introduction of the **Breakout Sessions**, which will be held in the afternoon. There are **three** Breakout Sessions, namely **agricultural productivity and market access, trade and logistics**, and **clean energy and climate resilience** where participants will

engage in deeper discussion in these topics. The Forum will end today with a **reception dinner and networking** kindly hosted by the Yunnan Government, and a **Study Tour** to be held tomorrow.

Mekong Institute is pleased to co-organize this Forum with the Yunnan Government with support and cooperation from the Central government of P.R. China and development partners, particularly based in Yunnan Province. There are about **240** participants, representing government agencies, development partners, private sector, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and state-owned enterprises, attending the Forum. Of this number, **190** are from **12 countries** outside P.R. China and **50** are from within China.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the organizing committee, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the **government of P.R. China and Yunnan Province** for co-organizing this Forum. To **all keynotes and speakers** for joining and sharing your perspectives on the theme of the Forum. To all **development partners** who, have in various forms, contribute to the preparation and organization of the Forum. To the **organizing committee members** from MI and Foreign Affairs Office of Yunnan Government and **student volunteers** for their support to the preparation and organization of the Forum. And lastly to **all participants** for your keen interests and participation in the Forum, which I believe will contribute a great deal to the deliberation and the outcomes.

Thank you for your kind attention.
