



**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF
THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 2/2023 (APPROVED)**
December 6, 2023, at 14:00 – 17:00 (Siem Reap)

OVERVIEW

1. Hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia, the second Steering Committee Meeting of 2023 was successfully convened with warm welcome remarks from Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Chair of the meeting. Representatives of the Steering Committee and observers from the six GMS countries, as well as the MI Secretariat, were present. The meeting proceeded with the adoption of the agenda, business arrangements, and the adoption of minutes from the previous Steering Committee Meeting.
2. The meeting covered significant topics including MI's 2023 achievements, the Summary and Recommendations of the Midterm Review of MI's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, proposed revisions to MI's organizational structure, operation manual, and salary scale, and the review of MI's Work Plan and Budget for 2024 and 2025.

MATTERS FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

3. Matters for acknowledgment included MI's performance updates, a comprehensive Annual Performance Review (APR) for 2023, and the completion of the Promoting Safe Food for Everyone (PROSAFE) Project. **The Steering Committee acknowledged these reports and agreed to their submission to the Council.**
4. **Annual Performance Review for 2023.** The Steering Committee was presented with details about MI's performance throughout the year.
5. Thailand suggested diversifying the presentation of achievements by highlighting successful cases and impactful stories. China emphasized that a detailed overview about projects' implementation with budgets should also be included in the APR. The projects' overview, together with the resources generated, should be reflected in the presentation by the Executive Director to the Committee so as to give comprehensive coverage of the work done by MI..
6. **Completion of the Promoting Safe Food for Everyone (PROSAFE) Project.** The Steering Committee was presented with an overview of the successful conclusion of the PROSAFE Project.
7. The CLMV countries still require support for their Prosafe-initiated initiatives. Cambodia emphasized the need for a focus on healthy food for aging societies and low-income countries. Furthermore, China expressed concerns that participants from China and Thailand were not included in PROSAFE. A crucial recommendation is for MI to ensure the inclusion and engagement of all its member countries in projects as a principle. It was stressed that development partners should be encouraged to respect the inclusiveness of MI in terms of equal participation by member states in all projects.

8. discussions are underway between New Zealand and MI regarding a potential prospect of transitional project and the exploration of the possibility of direct NZ funding for MI's core programs post-PROSAFE.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

9. The meeting also deliberated various items for future strategic planning, including the Mid-Term Review of the Mekong Institute Strategic Plan 2021-2025, proposed revisions to MI's organizational structure, operation manual, and salary scale, and the review of MI's Work Plan and Budget for 2024 and 2025.
10. **Mid-Term Review of the Mekong Institute Strategic Plan 2021-2025.** The Steering Committee discussed the Summary and Recommendations of the Midterm Review of MI's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which were deliberated during the Special Meeting held last month, November 16, 2023.
11. China raised several points about specific matters in the MTR findings and recommendations. China emphasized the importance of achieving technical depth while not complicating the structure of MI or duplicating the work of other organizations. There was also a recommendation for further study of certain proposals in the MTR. China highlighted that capacity building is a comparative advantage of MI and should not be considered an impediment. The need for tailored approaches that meet the unique requirements of member countries was raised. China urged the MI to prioritize quality over quantity when expanding funding resources for the implementation of the purpose and mandate of the MI.
12. With regard to seeking private sector partnership, China emphasized the distinction between MI's pursuit of public welfare and the private sector's profit-oriented motives. China reiterated MI's adherence to the "member-driven" principle in consistency with the status of the MI as an intergovernmental organization.
13. With the above deliberation, the Steering Committee agreed to propose the following recommendations to the Council:
 - a. The independent MTR report is a useful reference for future improvement.
 - b. The MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025 is still valid. Necessary modification could be introduced to refining activities for GMS development and institutional strengthening.
 - c. Efforts should be made to ensure annual financial surplus, and improved quality services in line with the mandate of MI that focuses on development cooperation and a member-driven approach.
 - d. Short-term measures to improve Organizational Structure, Operation Manual, and Salary Structure could be considered.
 - e. As a longer-term measure, the Council may form a sub-committee as necessary to review the recommendations and map out measures for further consideration.
14. **Proposed revisions to MI's organizational structure, operation manual, and salary scale.** The meeting noted the highlights of revisions to the organizational structure, operation manual, and salary scale.
15. In general, the Steering Committee expressed support for the revisions to MI's organizational structure, operation manual, and salary scale. However, members underscored the need for careful consideration in terms of financial implications and delivery of quality service.
16. Regarding the salary scale adjustments, there was a concern about the UN's suitability as a benchmark and suggestions for thorough presentations/analysis of the financial viability and potential impact.

17. **Review of MI's Work Plan and Budget for 2024 and 2025.** The meeting noted that the proposed Work Plan and Budget for 2024 and 2025 incorporated the agreed MTR recommendations and has not yet to be finalized.
18. China mentioned that digitalization could be a priority, aligning with current developmental trends and demands of the GMS. China highlighted the importance of integrating digitalization into the theme of the Mekong Forum 2024.
19. Emphasis was placed on the importance and necessity of thorough preparation of all relevant documents at least one week before the meeting so as to enable the timely consideration by the Committee and the Council.
20. A sub-committee was proposed for the 2023 Executive Director Performance Evaluation, and **the Steering Committee approved the appointment of this sub-committee for endorsement by the Council.**
21. Proposed members of the Subcommittee:
 - Mr. Ke Yousheng, Steering Committee Member for P. R. China
 - Ms. Arunee Hiam, Steering Committee Member for Thailand
 - Dr. Jean-Pierre A. Verbiest, Honorary Advisor
 - Facilitator: Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee, Steering Committee Chairman

COUNTRY REPORTS

22. China made a country report on its development to the meeting. Other countries will provide a copy of the country reports to the MI Secretariat.

DATE AND VENUE OF GOVERNING BOARD MEETING NO. 1/2023

23. The date and venue of the next meeting were discussed. The Steering Committee agreed to have the next Steering Committee (1/2024) meeting 10 days in advance of the Council meeting (1/2024). The Council Meeting may be held back-to-back with the Mekong Forum 2024 in Khon Kaen in the last week of July. A Special Steering Committee meeting will likewise be scheduled within the day before the Council meeting to finalize recommendations.