

DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING (as of Sep 13)
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 1/2024
July 16, 2024 | 02:00 PM – 04:15 PM (UTC+7 BKK Time)
Online Meeting via Zoom

ITEM 1: WELCOME REMARKS

1. Dr. Narongchai Akrasane, the Steering Committee Chair, formally acknowledged all the members present. He noted that a representative from China, Ms. Jianxiu Liu, is attending the meeting on behalf of a new Steering Committee member from China, Mr. Ye Xuenong. Greetings were extended to Mr. Ye, with anticipation for his participation in future meetings. The Chairman also expressed deep appreciation for Mr. Ke Yousheng, the previous member from China, for his significant contributions and dedication to the committee, citing that his efforts had been invaluable.
2. On behalf of the MI Steering Committee members, the Chairman welcomed the delegates of the six GMS countries who were observing the meeting, as well as the MI Secretariat Senior Management Team (SMT) and other members. The Chairman commended the members and everyone present for making time in their hectic schedules to convene.
3. With the preliminaries completed, the Chairman formally declared the first MI Steering Committee Meeting of 2024 open.

ITEM 2: ADOPTION OF AGENDA

4. The Chair asked for comments, concerns, or points of clarification from the members regarding the meeting's agenda. **There being none, the members adopted the agenda.**

ITEM 3: BUSINESS ARRANGEMENTS

5. Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn, MI Executive Director, announced several points for the attention of the Committee including online meeting arrangements, schedule for group photo, and meeting adjournment.

ITEM 4: MINUTES ADOPTION OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING NO. 2/2023 AND ACTION PROGRESS OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GOVERNING BOARD MEETING 2/2023

6. Mr. Suriyan informed the Committee that the minutes of the previous meeting were circulated to the council ahead of time and no comments were received.
7. He reported the progress on recommendations from the Governing Board Meeting 2/2023 including the following:
 - a. On PROSAFE - A transition project is being finalized. NZ is envisaged to confirm their support at the Council Meeting 1/2024.
 - b. On Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025 - The secretariat is finalizing the first draft of MTR action plan. The result of MTR sub-committee is expected to report to the GB at the next meeting.
 - c. On MI Operations Manual - The final draft Operations Manual will be circulated to the Council before its 1/2024 meeting.
 - d. On Salary Scale - SMT is assessing the financial implications. The implementation is planned for 2025.
 - e. On Multi-year Work Plan - Action has been taken and will report this under Matters for Consideration.

- f. ED Performance Evaluation - Action has been taken and will report this under Matters for Acknowledgement.
8. With no additional comments, concerns, or points of clarification from members regarding the two documents, **the members adopted the minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting 2/2024 and noted the action progress on recommendations from the Governing Board Meetings.**

ITEM 5: HIGHLIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON MATTERS FOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

9. ACTIVITY REPORT 1H 2024 (ITEM 5.1)

10. Mr. Suriyan presented the Activity Report for the first half of the year. The report gave the committee an overview of MI's activities, highlighting achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. The report noted various programmatic highlights and challenges, including:
 11. Highlights
 - a. Completion of over 60% of approved activities despite a late start.
 - b. Greater adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices and technologies by MI alumni.
 - c. MI received the Aziz-Ul Haq Rural Development Medal 2024 from the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) for its contributions to integrated rural development and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region.
 - d. Enhanced visibility as an ASEAN Prize Awardee.
 12. Challenges
 - a. Organizing activities and selecting appropriate participants with relevant backgrounds have been challenging.
 - b. Delays in receiving annual contributions impact cash flow. While there are no current cash flow issues, timely transfers are crucial for maintaining financial stability.
 - c. There have been delays and uncertainties regarding New Zealand's contribution, with discussions ongoing about transitioning to a new programmatic approach. This issue affects the funding support for 2024.
 - d. Efforts are needed to ensure synergies and alignment of activities, manage non-program expenses, and maintain them within the 30% limit set by the Council.
13. The Chair acknowledged the importance of the information provided and noted that many of these issues will be revisited when discussing the second-half activities. The Chair also highlighted that the situation with New Zealand's contribution will be further clarified in the upcoming discussions. The Chair invited questions from the members regarding the progress report and the overall picture of MI's activities.
14. On MI's capacity building activities, Thailand raised concerns about the reason for less-qualified or less-suitable training applications, citing issues such as lack of interest, advanced training levels, and expertise mismatch. The Chair supported this view, noting the demand problem. Mr. Suriyan suggested designing programs with the participants' needs in mind and ensuring alignment between training content and participants' responsibilities. To address these challenges, improving participant selection, incorporating action planning, and enhancing post-training feedback were recommended. The Chair also mentioned that collaborating with MI's Coordinating Agencies could help alleviate difficulties in finding suitable candidates.

15. The Chair invited the Myanmar representative to discuss Myanmar's participation in capacity development activities and explore possible improvements. The Myanmar representative stressed the need for equitable participation, while Mr. Suriyan highlighted the challenge of unequal funding opportunities. He suggested negotiating with funders to allow equitable participation and recommended exploring additional resources and strategic solutions to address financial gaps.
16. The Chair inquired about potential financing from the Myanmar government. The Myanmar representative indicated that such financing is difficult. Despite this, they expressed gratitude towards MI and acknowledged the current situation.
17. Mr. Suriyan continued with the details of the Activity Report. He reported that, based on the Annual Work Plan and budget approved at the end of last year, the program activities for the first six months had achieved 51% implementation. This includes 26 out of 76 planned program activities.
18. Activities funded by New Zealand had not yet been confirmed, impacting the completion rates. The Agricultural Development and Commercialization (ADC) Department had progressed significantly, while other departments were performing at an average level.
19. Operational support activities had seen less progress due to reliance on non-program expenses. The SMT planned to expedite these activities in the second half of the year, contingent on revenue targets being met.
20. In terms of capacity development, Mr. Suriyan reported that MI implemented 22 projects and organized 19 capacity development events, engaging 702 participants -- 49% female and 51% male. Of these participants, 29% came from the private sector and 71% from the public sector. Feedback indicated high satisfaction with training quality but lower confidence in applying knowledge, a point that needs further attention.
21. Cambodia raised concerns about the suitability of some applicants, linking it to their confidence in applying the knowledge. He questioned how to measure the increase in knowledge and its impact on participation.
22. ED Suriyan pointed out that effective training depends on several factors, including the availability of enabling policies and resources, alignment with institutional needs, and budget considerations. The Chair recognized the difficulty of institutional change and emphasized the need for participants to feel confident in applying their knowledge. Additionally, the Chair suggested that Myanmar should seek to increase the number of indirect participants from their country.
23. On human resource management, MI maintained 49 individuals from 11 nationalities, with a gender distribution of 39% female and 61% male, emphasizing GMS representation and gender equality in recruitment.
24. Mr. Suriyan introduced new staff members who joined the organization in the first half of the year. A significant addition was the Director of Sustainable Energy and Environment, Ms. Liu Guohua, who began in mid-May. She has also joined MI's Senior Management Team. He then invited Ms. Guohua to introduce herself.
25. Ms. Guohua addressed the Committee, expressing her enthusiasm for joining the team and her appreciation for attending her first Steering Committee Meeting. She shared her background,

including her previous work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and her four-year posting in the region. Ms. Guohua explained her decision to join the organization, highlighting her desire to mobilize resources and contribute effectively to the region's development.

26. The financial management report for the first half of the year was discussed. The financial statement from January to June 2024 detailed revenue sources, including long and short-term projects, one-off activities, GMS contributions, and others, totaling \$1,427,047. The total cost of project delivery, program administration, business development, and operation expenditures resulted in a net deficit of \$155,407, which is expected to be offset by a \$1 million project budget approval. Key financial management strategies and country contributions were also discussed.
27. The organization faced difficulties and challenges, with overall revenue falling short of 50% of the target. The approved budget was 3.6 million, but only 1.4 million was achieved, leading to a deficit due to higher expenditures than revenue. It was noted that non-program operating expenses were kept below 30%.
28. The financial performance showed a deficit in the first three months, though there was some improvement starting in April. By mid-year, there was a total deficit of approximately 150,000. The shortfall was partly attributed to delays in contributions from New Zealand and China.
29. Specifically regarding New Zealand's contribution, the usual annual amount is 700,000 USD. However, due to the completion of both projects from the previous year and the transition to a new program, there has been a significant gap of almost seven months. The New Zealand government agreed to fund a transition project for 12 to 18 months with the same annual contribution. However, the timing and amount of the transfer for this year remain uncertain. The delay has affected the ability to implement activities and utilize the budget effectively. Communication with the New Zealand Embassy is ongoing to resolve these issues, and there is an expectation that New Zealand Council representative will provide a clear update on the allocation and timing of the funds.
30. The percent share of MI revenues by country was as follows: China (31.2%), Republic of Korea (22.2%), Australia (16.5%), Multinational Organizations (11%), Thailand (10%), Germany (4%), Lao PDR (1.6%), Norway (1.4%), and Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia each at 0.7%. Project implementation was the largest revenue contributor at 80.95%, followed by GMS contributions at 18%, and other sources at 1.05%.
31. The discussion also covered the status of contributions from various countries. Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand had made their annual contributions, while China was processing its transfer. Vietnam had not yet indicated its contribution. Efforts were ongoing to facilitate these transfers and clarify the situation with New Zealand regarding their contribution and transfer timing. The presentation concluded with an invitation for further discussion and clarification on the accounting report and future financial projections.
32. China addressed their annual contribution and project funds. The representative confirmed that China would maintain its annual contribution of 150,000 USD. Regarding the project fund, due to delays in submitting project proposals from the Mekong Institute Secretariat, the confirmation of the transfer would be slightly later than usual this year. However, the representative noted that the domestic processing was proceeding normally, and the funds were expected to be transferred soon.

33. In response to the Chairman's question about the graph showing the percent share of MI Revenues by Countries, which displayed differing percentages for Myanmar and Lao PDR despite similar contribution amounts, Mr. Suriyan provided the following explanation:
34. He noted that the percentage for Lao PDR (1.6%) was higher because it included a unique situation where the government of Lao PDR had commissioned MI to organize a workshop. This budget was mobilized from a different source and was not part of the standard contribution. In contrast, the percentage for Myanmar (7%) referred only to its annual contribution. Mr. Suriyan highlighted that this situation illustrated how member countries were increasingly relying on the MI's services.
35. In response to the Chairman's question about why the contribution from New Zealand has not yet been provided, Mr. Suriyan offered the following explanation:
36. New Zealand's recent contributions to MI have been arranged programmatically. This means that funds are allocated based on agreed-upon program objectives and proposals. The process involves discussing and finalizing program details before the budget is allocated for implementation.
37. Currently, the five-year program previously developed has concluded, and discussions have been ongoing with New Zealand about a new program. However, the concept for this new program has not yet been finalized due to New Zealand's considerations about whether to continue with a programmatic approach or shift to a common project fund, which would involve a different funding mechanism.
38. This uncertainty has led to delays, and the transition to a new programmatic approach is expected to take some time. In the meantime, a transition project is being developed to address the gap and simplify the funding process. Once the transition project is approved, the annual contribution will be transferred based on that approval.
39. Mr. Suriyan emphasized that New Zealand remains committed to supporting MI, as demonstrated by recent statements from the New Zealand Prime Minister and the New Zealand Ambassador to Thailand. The delays are attributed to operational arrangements rather than a lack of commitment from New Zealand.
40. **The reports and presentations were acknowledged with commendations for the progress made. The Committee noted challenges in unclear funding from the traditional funding sources, which affected the progress of activities and financial performance in 2024. Recommendations were made to further improve the MI's recruitment of participants including attracting more qualified training applications and reducing mismatches, and increasing representation from Myanmar, as well as seek additional funding opportunities.**

41. MEKONG FORUM 2024 (ITEM 5.2)

42. The MI Secretariat discussed the preparations for the upcoming Mekong Forum. The committee was provided with information about the forum's theme, agenda, speakers, and schedule.
43. Approximately 300 participants are anticipated. Currently, 200 participants are confirmed, with additional walk-ins expected. The final number may increase with additional registrations and staff participation.
44. A \$20,000 contribution has been confirmed from a donor and is being processed. New Zealand will use their contribution to support the event. Sponsorships are also confirmed from organizations

including the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, Mitr Phol, and others. This year is expected to have more sponsorship compared to previous years.

45. A closed-door session will be organized for selected speakers to engage in dialogue with the Council. This session aims to guide future MI activities.

46. **Given its importance, the Chair encouraged all members to actively support and participate in the Mekong Forum. The Chair highlighted that their contributions would help shape the discussions and outcomes of the forum.**

47. IMPLEMENTATION OF MIDTERM REVIEW (MTR) OF MI STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025 (ITEM 5.3)

48. The Committee was informed of the Council's decision at GB 2/2023 meeting to form a subcommittee to review the MTR recommendations for submission to the Council for consideration. The subcommittee members comprise members from Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, and New Zealand, with the MI Executive Director serving as Secretary.

49. Mr. Suriyan informed the members that the Terms of Reference for the subcommittee have been circulated, and representatives have been invited. However, there has been a delay in the process due to the substantial workload currently being managed, particularly related to the Mekong Forum and other projects.

50. The subcommittee still needs to review the initial draft prepared by the MI Secretariat. This draft requires thorough consultation before it can be submitted to the Governing Board. The Midterm Review Action Plan will be proposed once the subcommittee reaches an agreement. The matter will be brought back to the Steering Committee for further discussion and guidance before a final submission to the Council.

51. **The Chair was informed that the results of the subcommittee's work will not be presented. The work is still in progress and is expected to be delayed until after the Council meeting. The Chair acknowledged this and suggested setting a timeline for the end-of-year meeting in Cambodia. The secretariat confirmed that the report should be ready by the second Council meeting.**

52. MI'S ROLE IN PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT (ITEM 5.4)

53. Mr. Madhurjya Kumar Dutta, MI's Director of Trade and Investment Facilitation Department, was invited to discuss MI's role in private sector engagement. The presentation focused on how MI can potentially engage and collaborate with the private sector to help address GMS development issues.

54. The ideas presented were based on a study led by MI last year with support from the Government of Japan. The study examined post-COVID and global contemporary issues impacting the Mekong region, how regional frameworks and the private sector are addressing these issues, and factors contributing to these challenges. The study's findings helped MI co-create projects proposed to Japan and identified additional areas where the private sector could engage.

55. Key points from the presentation included:

56. **Development Challenges in GMS:** GMS countries face challenges in economic growth, sustainability, job creation, and technology. The private sector, responsible for 50-60% of national income in GMS, must play a vital role in addressing these issues.
57. **Global Challenges:** Current global challenges include energy crises, climate change, technology disruptions, supply chain issues, and digital inequities. These challenges necessitate innovative solutions and sustainable practices, particularly in healthcare, energy, and infrastructure.
58. **Investment Opportunities:** Leading global companies and those operating in the Mekong region are making significant investments due to the region's cost-effectiveness and strategic location. Renewable energy and clean technology are emerging opportunities due to the region's energy resources and climate commitments.
59. **MI's Role in Enhancing Development:** MI can enhance private sector involvement through partnerships with regional organizations and leading global companies. This can be achieved by organizing forums, meetings, and workshops, collaborating on pilot projects, advocating for standard industry practices, and facilitating interactions between global companies and policymakers.
60. **Support for SMEs:** MI can support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in adopting advanced technologies and green investments. Given that SMEs constitute a major segment of enterprises and contribute significantly to employment and GDP, MI can facilitate the development of projects, strategies, and relevant policies to support them.
61. **Climate Change Adaptation:** MI can collaborate with global and regional companies to co-create projects that help SMEs reduce emissions and participate in global supply chains, aligning with global environmental standards.
62. **Industry 4.0:** GMS countries are gearing up for the next phase of industrial development characterized by advanced automation, artificial intelligence, and digitalization. MI can facilitate collaboration among industry groups and technical schools to navigate these changes.
63. **Agriculture Development:** MI has implemented several projects, creating success stories and lessons learned that can be utilized to facilitate agriculture development, sustainable energy development, and trade promotion.
64. **Public-Private Partnerships:** MI can play a facilitative role in raising private sector awareness and investments in climate change adaptation, improving efficiency, and fostering innovative practices.
65. **Future Projects:** MI is preparing to establish a platform to strengthen market linkages for SMEs, focusing on e-commerce and cross-border e-commerce to help SMEs harness market development potential.
66. **The Chair appreciated the presentation as a guideline for future projects involving the private sector.**
67. **COMPLETION OF LANCANG MEKONG BUSINESS FORUM PROJECT (ITEM 5.5)**
68. The Committee was informed of a recently concluded long-term project, the Lancang Mekong Business Forum, with the aim to strengthen regional value chains and enhance business linkages in the agribusiness sector. The project was funded by the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund (LMCSF).

69. Key achievements of the forum over five years, include:

- a. Organized six events over five years with 631 participants from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, and China.
- b. Provided a platform for market trends, innovative products, and investment opportunities in low-carbon and green technologies.
- c. Facilitated business matching opportunities and showcasing innovative food products and technologies.
- d. Generated industry data and enabling continuous business interactions through a dynamic, interactive web platform.

70. Despite COVID-19 challenges, the forum achieved significant collaborations and investments, and MI is now exploring a new project focused on an AI-based e-commerce marketplace for SMEs.

71. The Chair expressed gratitude to China for supporting the project and highlighted the significant outcome of having over 600 participants. This engagement is expected to foster numerous future collaborations. The Chair acknowledged that these participants, representing various companies, will likely lead to meaningful developments. **No additional questions were raised by members, and the presentation was acknowledged and appreciated for being highly informative.**

72. RESULTS OF ED PERFORMANCE EVALUATION 2023 (ITEM 5.6)

73. The Committee was informed of the recommendations by the subcommittee on the ED Performance Evaluation for 2023, which was conducted on February 2, 2024, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thailand.

74. The subcommittee rated the ED's performance at 90% based on the indicators set for 2023. Additionally, the subcommittee reviewed and adjusted the KPIs for 2024.

75. **The Chair noted that the committee could only endorse these recommendations to be submitted to the GB for final approval. With no objections raised, it was agreed to submit the recommendations to the Council during the scheduled GB meeting by the end of the month.**

ITEM 6. HIGHLIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

76. The meeting also discussed several matters for consideration of the committee including presentations and updates on the following: Revised Activity Plan of 2H 2024; Budget Revision 2024; and Audited Financial Report 2023. All these matters were comprehensively reported to the SC by the MI Secretariat. **The committee approved the items for endorsement to the Council and instructed the MI Secretariat to prepare an explanation for the Council outlining the cause of the earnings deficit and the proposed solutions.**

77. REVISED ACTIVITY PLAN 2H 2024 (ITEM 6.1)

78. The committee reviewed and discussed the revised activity plan for the second half of 2024. Adjustments to existing plans and resource allocation were made based on feedback from the first half of the year to address challenges and maximize impact.

79. MI is set to manage a total of 25 projects, including 10 long-term, 7 short-term, and 8 one-off activities. These projects are distributed as follows: 6 under the Agriculture Development and Commercialization Department, 8 under the Trade and Investment Facilitation Department, 2 under the Sustainable Energy and Environment Department, 1 under Social Inclusion and Vulnerability, and 8 under Contribution to the Broader GMS Cooperation Framework.
80. Under human resource management, MI plans to hire several regular contract positions, including a Program Director for ADC to replace retired staff, a MEL Manager and a MEL Officer for GMCA (both onboarding), a Program Coordinator and a Program Officer for TIF (both re-announced), and an HR Officer (re-announced). A recruitment plan will be under the new project (RPHL & MI) supported by the Global Fund.

81. BUDGET REVISION 2024 (ITEM 6.2)

82. Proposed revisions to the 2024 budget were presented by the MI Secretariat. Necessary adjustments were made to align with the priorities for the remainder of the year.
83. Initially, the 2024 annual budget targeted a revenue of \$3,695,595, but this was revised to \$3,677,075, resulting in a variance of -\$18,520. For expenses, the initially programmed amount was \$3,622,300, revised to \$3,624,225, with a variance of \$1,925. Earnings were expected to be \$73,295 but were revised to \$52,850, showing a decrease of \$20,445.
84. The project opportunity fund was projected at \$1,642,868, but the actual amount received was \$518,015, representing only 32% of the target achievement.
85. It was reported that MI's financial performance in 2024 is expected to be positive, provided that the opportunity fund of US\$ 1,111,570 is received from traditional funding sources (NZAP and China), and non-traditional sources (RPHLN).
86. The most challenging issue has been the funding uncertainty from New Zealand. For China, the transfer of funding support to the Mekong Forum 2024 has been made while the remaining fund transfer is expected to be made in August 2024.

87. AUDITED FINANCIAL REPORT 2023 (ITEM 6.3)

88. The audited financial report for 2023 was presented, offering an overview of MI's financial health and compliance with regulatory requirements.
89. There were no material audit findings in MI's Financial Statement for 2023. The total revenue exceeded the forecasted revenue due to the inclusion of a few approved projects that were not originally accounted for in the forecast. The review confirmed MI's strong financial standing in 2023 and will guide future budgeting and planning.

ITEM 7. COUNTRY REPORTS

90. All SC members delivered the highlights of their respective country reports, which generally emphasized and reiterated each GMS government's support for MI. **The Chair requested the members to share the complete report to the MI Secretariat.**

91. Mr. Hang Suviddya, Cambodia

92. Mr. Hang Suviddya emphasized the significance of capacity development, highlighting it as central to Cambodia's policy program and deployment strategy. He stated that Cambodia prioritizes its people, particularly in the core development areas like labor mobility and migration. He pointed out that migrant workers, especially those working in neighboring countries, contribute to both the development of the host country and their home country, such as Cambodia. However, he acknowledged that these migrants face challenges that need to be addressed.

93. To tackle these issues, Mr. Hang suggested the implementation of a joint project with member countries to develop migration policies aimed at protecting migrant workers, ensuring their legal and safe employment, and allowing them to continue contributing to their home country's development. He agreed with the idea of having the Secretariat proceed with this initiative and suggested informing the governing board about the importance of this subject.

94. Ms. Jianxiu Liu, speaking on behalf of Mr. Ye Xuenong, China

95. Ms. Jianxiu Liu expressed her honor in representing China at the Steering Committee meeting. She began by extending her appreciation to the MI Secretariat for their arrangements and thanked Dr. Narongchai and Mr. Suriyan for their briefings on MI's work. China recognized the progress made during the first half of 2024, particularly as the year marked the eighth anniversary of the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) mechanism.

96. She highlighted that, under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and the leaders of the five Mekong countries—Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam—China and its regional partners have committed to building a community with a shared future, both bilaterally and multilaterally under the LMC mechanism. The LMC Special Fund has supported various livelihood projects, which have provided quality agricultural products to the region. Additionally, connectivity projects like the China-Laos Railway, the China-Thailand Railway, and the Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport have boosted regional trade and cross-border travel.

97. Ms. Liu also noted the expansion of cooperation in emerging areas such as the digital economy and new energy, with the LMC Innovation Corridor developing rapidly. She mentioned the successful LMC leaders meeting and Foreign Ministers' meeting held in December of the previous year, where the six countries reached important consensus on deepening cooperation in connectivity and green development. They also adopted a five-year plan of action for 2023-2027, outlining the future direction for deeper cooperation.

98. China reiterated its commitment to supporting the neighborhood policy of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness. As a member of MI, China has strongly supported the sub-regional countries' development and will continue to do so by maintaining an annual contribution of \$150,000. China is also considering funding the Mekong Forum 2024 and is in consultation with the Secretariat to carry out projects in digital innovation and energy connectivity.

99. Finally, Ms. Liu emphasized China's hope that MI will continue to implement the MI Strategic Plan 2021-2025, focusing on a member-driven principle to promote solidarity, cooperation, and the joint addressing of challenges. China is willing to collaborate with all members to promote sustainable development in the sub-region. She concluded by thanking the participants.

100. **Mr. Inthasone Thirakul, speaking on behalf of Mr. Khamphinh Philakone, Lao PDR**
101. Mr. Inthasone Thirakul began by correcting a previous statement made by Dr. Narongchai, clarifying that Mr. Khamphinh, the Lao PDR council member, was not able to attend the meeting. He expressed gratitude for the comprehensive and interesting presentations before the break and took the opportunity to commend the achievements of MI and its development partners in capacity building and human resources development over the past six months.
102. Mr. Thirakul acknowledged the valuable cooperation between MI and the GMS member nations, particularly MI's support and assistance to countries like Lao PDR in capacity building and human resource development. He expressed confidence that MI would continue to support GMS countries in achieving their development priorities related to connectivity, competitiveness, community building, and socio-economic development, in line with MI's strategic plan and flagship initiatives.
103. He emphasized the importance of continuing to implement capacity-building and development programs for member countries and adapting existing implementation plans to the current context. He affirmed Lao PDR's full support for the implementation of MI's Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which aligns with the country's needs.
104. Mr. Thirakul informed the committee that human resource development is a significant priority for Lao PDR and is one of the main goals for national advancement. He expressed appreciation for MI's secondment program, which offers Lao PDR government officials the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills through employment and training at MI. He proposed that MI provide further support to Lao PDR by offering more in-country training opportunities and additional chances for Lao government officials to work with MI.
105. In closing, Mr. Thirakul reiterated Lao PDR's readiness to cooperate closely with MI and other member countries to achieve MI's development plans and objectives and to overcome emerging challenges through collective efforts. He concluded by thanking the participants.
106. **Dr. Aung Moe Chai from Myanmar**
107. Dr. Aung Moe Chai acknowledged the completion of 22 activities and the organization of 19 capacity development events by the MI during the first six months of 2024.
108. Dr. Aung highlighted Myanmar's emphasis on supporting the private sector, recognizing its importance in socio-economic development. The government has prioritized the development of the private sector through initiatives focused on MSMEs, SMEs, and entrepreneurship. He welcomed MI's efforts to involve the private sector more in regional integration programs, particularly those that support agriculture-based enterprises and the promotion of micro, medium, and large enterprises.
109. He also emphasized Myanmar's focus on digitalization as a means to balance regional economic integration and noted the country's close cooperation with regional initiatives. In light of these priorities, Dr. Aung proposed the development of capacity-building programs that focus on collaboration in food and agriculture, MSME development, digitalization, and innovation.
110. **Mrs. Arunee Hiam, Thailand**

111. Mrs. Arunee Hiam expressed her gratitude to the Chairman, Mr. Suriyan, and the team for organizing the online Steering Committee meeting. She shared Thailand's vision for international development cooperation, noting that it is a key component of Thailand's foreign policy aimed at accelerating the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thailand focuses on four main areas of security: food, health, employment, and environment.

112. In addition to bilateral development cooperation and partnerships with traditional donors, Thailand has engaged with United Nations Development Agencies to enhance development partnerships with countries of the Global South. This approach leverages the technical expertise available within the UN to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

113. Mrs. Hiam mentioned that she would provide examples of Thailand's efforts in writing but highlighted that the upcoming trilateral cooperation between Thailand and other countries this year would contribute positively to the Mekong region's social and economic growth, as well as sustainable development.

114. She concluded by expressing confidence that these initiatives, including both the Thailand implementation outcomes and MI implementation outcomes, will support the region's development objectives.

115. **Mr. Nguyen Viet Ha, Vietnam**

116. Mr. Nguyen Viet Ha extended congratulations to MI for its excellent performance during the first six months of 2024. He expressed Vietnam's agreement with the recommendations and reports presented at the meeting. Vietnam committed to supporting and cooperating with MI to achieve its objectives in 2024 and in the years to come.

ITEM 8. DATE AND VENUE OF GOVERNING BOARD MEETING NO. 2/2024

117. As a matter of practice, the next series of GB meetings were tentatively scheduled as follows:

- e. Online SC Meeting 2/2024: November 19, 2024 (14:00 - 16:30)
- f. Special SC Meeting 2/2024: December 16, 2024 (16:00 - 17:00)
- g. Council Meeting 2/2024: December 17, 2024 (09:00 - 12:00)

ITEM 9. OTHER MATTERS

118. The SC members were briefed about the schedule of upcoming activities including MI Governing Board Members and Experts Dialogue, Special Steering Committee Meeting, MI Council Meeting 1/2024, and the Mekong Forum, all happening between July 31 to August 1, 2024.

119. **ADJOURNMENT**

120. In conclusion, the Chair thanked all members for their active participation and valuable contributions. The meeting ended with a reaffirmation of the commitment to advancing the discussed initiatives and enhancing cooperation among members.

ANNEX 1. List of Attendees

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS	
Chairman	Dr. Narongchai Akrasanee Chairman MFC Asset Management Plc. Bangkok, Thailand
Government of Cambodia	Mr. Hang Suvidhya Deputy Secretary General General Secretariat for Population and Development Ministry of Planning Phnom Penh, Cambodia
People's Republic of China	Ms. Jianxiu Liu In behalf of Mr. Ye Xuenong
Government of Lao PDR	Mr. Inthasone Thirakul In behalf of Mr. Khamphinh Philakone
Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar	Dr. Aung Moe Chai Deputy Director General Foreign Economic Relations Department Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations
Royal Thai Government	Mrs. Arunee Hiam Deputy Director General Thailand International Cooperation Agency Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Government of Viet Nam	Mr. Nguyen Viet Ha Official, Foreign Economic Relations Department Ministry of Planning and Investment
Mekong Institute (non-voting member)	Mr. Suriyan Vichitlekarn Executive Director, Mekong Institute
MEKONG INSTITUTE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM	
Ms. Maria Theresa S. Medialdia Director, Agricultural Development and Commercialization Department	
Mr. Madhurjya K. Dutta Director, Trade and Investment Facilitation Department	
Ms. Liu Guohua Director, Sustainable Energy and Environment Department	
Mr. Rithy Buth Director, Finance and Operations Department	
MEETING SECRETARIAT	
Ms. Pornwilai Pumira External Relations and Protocols Manager	
Ms. Jian Wang Program Manager, Sustainable Energy and Environment Department	

Ms. Anusara Tanpitak Communications Manager
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Ms. Anna Leigh Anillo Communications Coordinator

Mr. Joel Emmanuel Manalo Communications Officer
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Mr. Tanadech Sriwanchai Executive Assistant
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Mr. Narathip Dahan IT Officer

Mr. Ratchaphon Tansura IT Assistant
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