

**Co-Chairs' Statement of the
Ninth Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting**

in Bangkok, Thailand, on August 3, 2019

1. The Ninth Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Bangkok, the Kingdom of Thailand on August 3, 2019. The Foreign Ministers' Meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Ms. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea (ROK), and H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand. Participants included H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, Senior Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia, H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, H.E. Mr. Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and H.E. Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.
2. The Ministers welcomed significant progress made in Mekong-ROK relations including substantial achievements and outcomes in various areas that have benefited all the involved parties and agreed to continue the cooperation for peace, prosperity, and sustainable development of the regions.
3. The Ministers reviewed the progress of the Mekong-ROK cooperation and discussed its future direction. While reaffirming their continued commitment to working together to strengthen cooperation at all levels and areas, the Ministers acknowledged that the countries have witnessed significant progress made in the Mekong-ROK cooperation and expressed optimistic views about the future of the Mekong-ROK partnership, including the elevation of the Mekong-ROK cooperation mechanism to the summit level.
4. Noting that the year 2019 marks the 30th anniversary of the ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations, the Ministers welcomed the *New Southern Policy* of the ROK with its vision of '*People-centered Community of Peace and Prosperity*' which aims to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN member states. The Ministers reiterated the importance and role of the Mekong-ROK partnership in narrowing the development gap within ASEAN, which will result in comprehensive integration of ASEAN, as stated in the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, and the realization of above-mentioned *Community* in the relations between ASEAN and the ROK. The Ministers welcomed the theme of Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2019, '*Advancing Partnership for Sustainability*', and shared the view that the Mekong-ROK partnership and cooperation accord with the theme.

(Review of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation)

5. The Ministers reaffirmed the goals and principles outlined in the Han River Declaration of Establishing the Mekong-ROK Comprehensive Partnership for Mutual Prosperity, adopted in 2011 and reaffirmed their commitment to the full implementation of the Plan of Action (2017-2020), adopted at the Seventh Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2017.
6. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the Plan of Action (2017-2020) and the projects in the six priority areas of cooperation –

Infrastructure, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Green Growth, Water Resource Development, Agriculture and Rural Development and Human Resource Development – and agreed to make efforts to fully implement on-going projects and develop new projects with a view to enhancing connectivity, narrowing the development gap and enhancing capacity for sustainable development of the regions.

- 6.1. The Ministers welcomed that four projects out of twelve projects described in the Plan of Action (2017-2020) were successfully implemented and laid a foundation for further cooperation under the Mekong-ROK Cooperation framework. The four completed projects include ‘Software Professional Personnel Training’, ‘Vocational Training Project for Youth’, ‘Water Resource Management and Development on the Mekong River linking with catchment of the Tonle Sap Great Lake’ and ‘Comprehensive Training to Enhance Rice Productivity in the Mekong Region’.
- 6.2. The Ministers took note that port development projects, such as providing technical assistance to establish a Master Plan of port development in Viet Nam and conducting feasibility studies on port development in Lao PDR and Myanmar, are now under way, and shared the view that such infrastructure projects will enhance connectivity of the Mekong region.
- 6.3. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the area of ICT including projects such as ‘ASEAN Cyber University’, ‘Preservation and Digitization of the Bagan Photographic Archive’ and ‘Building a Strengthening Capacity of Cultural Sector’ and agreed to develop other ICT-driven cooperative projects in areas of education, culture, and more.
- 6.4. The Ministers appreciated continued cooperation under the framework of the Korea-Mekong Forest Cooperation Center (KMFCC) and the opening of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) Regional Education and Training Center in Yangon in 2018, and agreed to work together for the sustainable management of the environment and forest conservation in the Mekong region.
7. The Ministers recognized that Thailand and the ROK have jointly implemented six training courses in the areas of sustainable agriculture based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) and water resources development under the framework of the Second Three-Year KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) – TICA (Thailand International Cooperation Agency) Action Plan on Joint Training Program between 2017 to 2019 for ASEAN countries and Timor-Leste under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Strengthening Partnership for International Development Cooperation co-signed in 2014. The Ministers agreed that the basic principles and purposes of the joint training program between Thailand and the ROK are in line with those of the Mekong-ROK cooperation and that the trilateral cooperation contributes to the integration of ASEAN. In this regard, the six countries will work closely together to develop and strengthen trilateral cooperation for sustainable development of the regions.
8. The Ministers appreciated the ROK's continued contributions to the development of the Mekong region through Official Development Assistance (ODA). The Ministers agreed to work together to further increase the effectiveness and efficiency of ODA in accordance with the needs of the Mekong countries.

9. The Ministers welcomed the continued efforts made by the ROK to increase the size of the Mekong-Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF) from 1.12 million USD in 2018 to 2 million USD in 2019 and the ROK's plan to increase its volume to 3 million USD by 2020 in a bid to meet the increasing demand for MKCF-supported projects. The Ministers also took note of the ROK government's contribution of 7.42 million USD between 2013 and 2019 through the MKCF and agreed to put forth projects for sustainable development, which will help reduce the development gap among ASEAN countries.
10. The Ministers took note of the importance of effective operation of the MKCF and improvement made in the implementation of MKCF-supported projects.
 - 10.1. The Ministers welcomed the progress made in the first and second batches of thirteen MKCF-supported projects, with seven projects endorsed in 2017 and six projects endorsed in 2016. Among the thirteen projects, four projects have been successfully implemented, while nine projects are still in progress.
 - 10.2. The Ministers appreciated the efforts of the Mekong Institute (MI) in managing the MKCF, including receiving and reviewing a total of more than a hundred project concept papers for the third batch in 2019. The Ministers also appreciated the efforts of the ROK in shortlisting the proposals in line with the objectives of the MKCF and the Mekong-ROK Plan of Action 2017-2020.
 - 10.3. The Ministers recognized the third batch of the MKCF-supported projects for 2019; namely, 'Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening for Logistics Monitoring and Evaluation Database Development in Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam (Cambodia)', 'Development of Regional Cooperation Project Monitoring Data Center (Lao PDR)', 'Demonstration of Model Community Forests to Promote Community Forestry Development and Improve Livelihood of Local Community (Myanmar)', 'Capacity Building on Circular Economy, Resource and Energy Efficiency for Productivity and Sustainability of Cassava Chain to High Value Products (Thailand)', 'Strengthen the Water User Organization (WUOs) for irrigated agriculture development in the Mekong Delta (Viet Nam)', 'Water Data Utilization Platform Prototype and Capacity Building in the Mekong Region (The Republic of Korea / The United States of America)', 'Sustainable Smart Tourism Development in the Mekong Region (Mekong Institute)' and expressed hopes to see the implementation of the projects once the final proposals are endorsed by the both of the Mekong countries and the ROK.
11. The Ministers took note that the Workshop on the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) and MKCF was held in Cambodia in July as a follow-up to the discussion among the Ministers at the Seventh Mekong-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting and to implement the Plan of Action (2017-2020). During the workshop, participants discussed in details the two cooperation funds and learnt how to develop clear, thorough and targeted project proposals. The Ministers emphasized the importance of such efforts and agreed to enhance understanding of the Mekong-ROK Cooperation Mechanism.

(Future Direction)

12. Recognizing that there exist a number of development partnerships and mechanisms in the Mekong region, including the Mekong River Commission (MRC), Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), Cambodia – Lao PDR – Myanmar – Viet Nam Cooperation (CLMV), Cambodia – Lao PDR – Viet Nam Development Triangle Area (CLV-DTA), Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), Friends of Lower Mekong (FLM), Greater Mekong Sub-region Economic Cooperation (GMS), Mekong-Japan Cooperation, Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) and Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC), the Ministers shared the view that the Mekong-ROK cooperation can be further developed in a close collaboration with other regional cooperation frameworks.
 - 12.1. The Ministers of the Mekong countries welcomed the decision of the ROK to become an ACMECS development partner, and the six Ministers agreed to work closely together to develop and implement concrete projects under the framework of the ACMECS.

(Elevation of Mekong-ROK cooperation mechanism)

13. The Ministers welcomed the elevation of the Mekong-ROK cooperation mechanism from the ministerial level to the summit level and the decision to hold the inaugural Mekong-ROK Summit back to back with the 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit. The Ministers agreed to work closely together for the success of the Mekong-ROK Summit with concrete and substantive outcomes.
 - 13.1 The Ministers shared the view that the outcome documents of the Summit will serve as a new guideline and direction for the future Mekong-ROK cooperation, and agreed to cooperate closely in the preparation of the outcome documents.
 - 13.2. Recognizing the need to adapt to the changes in the global landscape and ensure that the Mekong-ROK Cooperation effectively supports the development of the Mekong region, the Ministers agreed to revisit the current six priority areas of the Mekong-ROK cooperation – Infrastructure, ICT, Green Growth, Water Resource Development, Agriculture and Rural Development and Human Resources Development. The Ministers shared the view that the Mekong countries and the ROK will work together to prepare for renewed priority areas to meet the needs of the Mekong countries.

(Engagement of Private Sector)

14. The Ministers highlighted the importance of the private sector in sustainable development of the region and shared the view that the previous six rounds of the Mekong-ROK Business Forums which took place in respective six partner countries have strengthened economic ties between the ROK and the Mekong countries. In this regard, the Ministers welcomed the success of the 6th Mekong-ROK Business Forum held in Seoul, the ROK in December 2018 under the theme of “Promoting Co-prosperity through Eco-friendly Innovation among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Mekong Countries and the ROK”, and agreed to hold the 7th Mekong-ROK Business Forum in Thailand.

(Exchange of Views on Regional and Global Issues)

15. The Ministers welcomed the efforts made by the ROK and the Mekong countries toward peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Acknowledging that a stable and peaceful regional environment is paramount in achieving mutual prosperity between the Mekong countries and the ROK, the Ministers shared the view that the two sides will cooperate closely toward the realization of complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula.
16. The Ministers expressed concern on the unabating tide of trade protectionism and the developments relating to the trade tensions between the trading partners and reiterated the commitment to uphold transparent, free, open, inclusive and rules-based multilateral trading system led by the WTO.
17. The Ministers exchanged views on regional issues including the South China Sea, underlining the need for the early conclusion of a substantive and effective Code of Conduct (COC). They also discussed non-traditional security issues such as transnational crimes, terrorism, climate change, natural disasters, water, food, energy security, including transboundary water resources, cyber security and agreed to work together to strengthen cooperation and collective response to such threats to promote peace and stability in the region.

(10th Mekong-ROK Foreign Minister's Meeting)

18. The Ministers agreed to hold the 10th Mekong-ROK Foreign Minister's Meeting, with Viet Nam and the ROK as Co-Chairs, on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Minister's Meeting (AMM) and ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences (PMC+1) with Dialogue Partners in Viet Nam in 2020. The venue and time will be decided in due course by the Co-Chairs.

(The inaugural Mekong-ROK Summit)

19. The Ministers agreed to work together for the success of the inaugural Mekong-ROK Summit to be held in Busan, the ROK on November 27, 2019, back to back with the 2019 ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit on November 25-26, 2019. **/End/**