



Mekong Youth Declaration

**Regional preparation meeting of the
World Youth Parliament for Water**

October 11-18, 2014,

Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic



- Preamble -

Representing the six countries: People's Republic of China, Union of Myanmar, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam, we are young people of the Mekong River Basin. We have assembled in Vientiane, Lao PDR from October 11 to 18, 2014 in conjunction to the regional exchange on IWRM experiences in the Mekong River Basin to focus our efforts for the sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin, a main water resource in our region, and our source of identity as Mekong Youth.

The Mekong River links and unites us. It defines who we are. For us, being Mekong Youth means more than coming from the six countries of the Mekong region. Being Mekong Youth means being passionate about the Mekong River Basin and the future of our region.

We are Mekong Youth: rich in history, culture, and traditions. While others see conflict in our differences, we see the beauty of our diversity. It makes us creative, resilient, and wise. We are neighbors and friends. Our destinies undeniably connected. Our values bind us together. We are respectful not only of our elders but also of our environment. We believe in the right to equitable access to our shared water resources.

Through dialogue and cooperation, we increase understanding of each other's concerns for the Mekong River Basin. We affirm our commitment to seek and implement solutions to the problems that threaten not only the local citizens from the 6 countries whose livelihoods and cultural identity come from the Mekong River Basin but also the larger international society who benefit from it.

Like the Naga or Dragon, the Mekong River is majestic, beautiful, and awe-inspiring. As Mekong Youth, we are proud of the Mekong River and we know deeply that our identities, hopes, and futures, are undeniably tied to the health and sustainable management of the Mekong River Basin.



- Our Shared Concern -

Just as our ancestors faced extreme rapids and waterfalls to traverse the Mekong River, we still navigate through many challenges in our region.

For us, Mekong Youth, climate change is the most important environmental issue not only in the Mekong River Basin but also globally. Climate change has caused tremendous impacts to the Mekong River and our region such as changes in the pattern, frequency and intensity of water related disasters. Extreme seasonal events make forecasting the weather more difficult which threatens the lives and livelihoods of the citizens of our region.

We have to devote more attention to biodiversity in the Mekong River Basin. Sanitation, hygiene, and wastewater management must improve, as they are complex and pervasive issues in the region with enormous environmental, social, and economic implications.

Dam construction promotes high economic growth and infrastructure development in this region. However, challenges such as inappropriate policies, inefficient technology and improper management leads to negative social and environmental impacts. IWRM practices need to be improved to support sustainable development.

The way how our people live has drastically changed. We need to preserve and respect our Mekong culture through public awareness and public participation activities. More cooperation between civil society and government is needed for better water governance.

- Our Shared Vision -

In 15 years, as Mekong Youth, we envision a Mekong River Basin with enough clean water throughout the year, especially during the dry season, to sustain livelihoods of our local communities such as fishing and growing rice. We dream of empowered and capable local people who get most of the benefit from the river.

In 15 years, we want to see successful conservation and rehabilitation of the rich and unique biodiversity of our region. Riparian areas associated with the Mekong River will be protected through transboundary cooperation. Biodiversity conservation corridors must continue to be established and supported in all six Mekong countries.

In 15 years, we would like to continue appreciating the beauty of the Mekong River through the development of water treatment systems. We must keep its ecosystems healthy by decreasing pollution so that we can all swim in a clean and green Mekong River. This also ensures access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene for all in our region.



In 15 years, we will enjoy more sustainable landmarks, green buildings, water parks, and Mekong festivals along the Mekong bank. We want to recognize Naga or Dragon Bridge as the symbol of our region because we want to celebrate our rich cultures and increase understanding and trust between each other. We want to travel easily across the six Mekong countries to facilitate cultural exchange and development of trade and tourism.

- Our Commitments -

We, as Mekong youth, strongly:

- Believe in the power of communication to catalyze change in our society and promote our Mekong Identity. Through our creativity, we will use communication to educate citizens on the water issues in our region. Digital technologies and new media that are available to us will enable us to reach out and contribute to supporting the communities of the Mekong River Basin.
- Believe that increased cooperation lead to reach sustainable development. We agree to strengthen cooperation among the public sector, private sector and civil society to ensure the inclusion of all needs and opinions. We will organize and participate in conferences, dialogues, and debates to increase collaboration across sectors. We will facilitate trainings, workshops, and capacity-building activities to improve water governance.
- Believe in sharing our knowledge and experiences about the Mekong. We will establish the Mekong Youth Environment Network (MekongYEN) in order to strengthen our relationships and our Mekong identity. As a youth-led group, MekongYEN will serve as a platform for cooperation, capacity-building and intergenerational dialogues between youth and all generations.
- Believe that participation, especially of marginalized communities in our region, will improve water resources management. We will identify key water messages from the region and ensure that they are heard in policy discussions and national, regional, and global platforms such as the 7th World Water Forum.
- Believe in the ability of young people to achieve concrete and positive change on the ground. We will support youth by facilitating access to small grants and mentorship to accelerate implementation of community-based, youth-led projects in the Mekong river basin. We will organize activities such as river clean-ups to improve waste management, sanitation and hygiene.
- Believe that education, and raising public awareness, are ones of the most efficient ways to change behaviors of children, youth, and local communities in both rural and urban areas on water conservation and waste reduction. We will hold creative competitions that promote greening of the environment. We will produce awareness materials such as T-Shirts with messages, pamphlets and brochures.



Just like the Mekong River, we are united and powerful. Our passion and commitments for our basin will last long.

We invite you to work with us, the youth of the Mekong Youth. With your support, our vision of the Mekong will come true.

