

VIENTIANE DECLARATION

of the Third Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) Leaders' Meeting “Enhancing Partnership for Shared Prosperity”

We, the Heads of State/Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, held the 3rd Mekong-Lancang Cooperation (MLC) Leaders' Meeting on 24 August 2020 through virtual meeting under the theme of “**Enhancing Partnership for Shared Prosperity**”.

1. The world economy is facing both expanding opportunities and rising challenges, complicated by profound and rapid changes in the world. Reaffirming that strengthening multilateralism to support win-win cooperation is essential for addressing challenges and ensuring the benefit to all members. MLC is contributing to the social-economic development of regional countries and enhancing the well-being of their people, narrowing the development gap among countries, supporting the ASEAN Community building as well as advancing South-South cooperation and enhancing the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. Recalling our firm commitment as embodied in the *Sanya Declaration of the First LMC Leaders' Meeting* to build a Community of Shared Future of Peace and Prosperity among Mekong–Lancang Countries and the *Phnom Penh Declaration of the Second MLC Leaders' Meeting* to envision Our River of Peace and Sustainable Development, as the foundation for Mekong-Lancang Cooperation development.
3. Expressing our common aspiration and collective commitment to advance the MLC development to realise the enormous and untapped development potentials through creating conducive environment of lasting peace, stability, solidarity and harmony which will contribute to sustainable development and shared prosperity in the Mekong–Lancang region as well as jointly addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges faced by the region.
4. Reaffirming the principles of consensus, equality, voluntarism, mutual consultation and coordination, common contribution and shared benefits and respect for the United Nations Charter, ASEAN Charter and international laws. Reiterating that cooperation activities must be in accordance with domestic laws, rules, regulations and procedures of each member country.

5. Reiterating that the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation has witnessed substantive development in various areas since its inception in 2016 and its importance, together with Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), visions of other Mekong sub-regional cooperation, in contributing to prosperity and sustainable development, advancing South-South cooperation as well as enhancing the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
6. Welcoming the successful convening of the Fourth MLC Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 17 December 2018 in Luang Prabang Province, Lao PDR, and the Fifth MLC Foreign Ministers' Meeting on 20 February 2020 in Vientiane, Lao PDR where a number of strategic policy documents, such as the Joint Press Communiqués of the Fourth and the Fifth MLC Foreign Ministers' Meetings were adopted and the Progress Reports on Implementation of the MLC Five-Year Plan of Action was circulated.
7. Welcoming the upgrading of the MLC Water Resources Cooperation, appreciating China's sharing of hydrological information of the Lancang River throughout the year, and the successful convening of the First Ministerial Meeting of Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation in December 2019 in Beijing, PR China during which the Joint Statement of the Ministerial Meeting of Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation and the List of Proposed Projects on Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation were endorsed with a view to ensure sustainable use of water resources. Commending the active steps taken to establish partnership between MLC and Mekong River Commission, including the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Mekong-Lancang Water Resource Cooperation Center and MRC Secretariat to strengthen the cooperation among riparian countries and create synergy in regional water resources cooperation for future sustainability and shared benefits in the basin.
8. Highly appreciating China's continued support to MLC Special Fund to implement regional projects with an aim to promote capacity building in the context of the 4th Industrial Revolution, people to people's exchanges and further advance socio-economic development in the region. Noting with satisfaction that xxxxxxxx of the projects of the MLC Special Fund have been completed or made substantial progress, thus laying a solid foundation for subsequent rounds of MLC projects.
9. Appreciating member countries' joint endeavor to control the COVID-19 pandemic in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation, mutual help and support with regards to the sharing of information on the outbreak and technical guidelines for prevention, control, diagnosis and treatment as well as recognizing their active efforts made to fight against the pandemic in a

timely manner. Welcoming China's announcement of the establishment of the LMC Special Fund for Public Health within the framework of the LMC Special Fund to support public health cooperation projects of the six countries in the future.

10. Commending the fruitful outcomes achieved by the Joint Working Groups (JWGs) of the key priority areas, the highly efficient operation of the Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation Center, the Mekong-Lancang Environmental Cooperation Center, the Mekong-Lancang Agricultural Cooperation Center, the Mekong-Lancang Youth Exchange Cooperation Center, the Mekong-Lancang Vocational Education Training Center and the Global Center for Mekong Studies (GCMS), believing that the JWGs and cooperation centers, which have played active role in advancing the practical cooperation in their respective areas.
11. Endeavoring to further pursue the MLC spirit of openness, inclusiveness, take into account the national strategies, development visions and sectoral and master plans of the respective Mekong-Lancang countries, and enhance complementarity with the priority areas of the ASEAN Community building and the ASEAN-China Cooperation, while seeking synergy and complementarity with existing regional cooperation mechanisms including ACMECS, ASEAN, Belt and Road Initiative, Mekong River Commission and the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation Program.
12. Looking into the future, we emphasize the importance of further strengthening and deepening the cooperation in the three pillars areas and five priority areas and may explore new cooperation areas that can respond to the evolving and emerging development needs of the Mekong-Lancang countries aiming to enhance regional connectivity and economic integration development.

WE HEREBY DECLARE:

I. Enhancing Partnership on Political and Security Cooperation

The Political and Security Pillar is of crucial importance to the MLC Cooperation. We have witnessed that multi-level cooperative mechanisms are effective channels for facilitating communication, strengthening policy coordination and enhancing political mutual trust. Therefore, we endeavor to further support the following measures:

- 1.1 Strengthen high-level exchanges and dialogues among political parties, parliaments and government officials in accordance with the spirit and cooperation principles of MLC. Promote exchanges and dialogues among local/ regional governments/ administration of border areas as well as border management departments of the six countries in line with domestic rules and regulations of each member country.

- 1.2 Enhance partnership to ensure lasting peace, stability, solidarity and harmony while upholding the principle of equality, mutual benefits, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and non interference in other countries' internal affairs, respect for international laws in order to create favourable conditions for sustainable development and shared prosperity.
- 1.3 Enhance cooperation, strengthening exchange of information, and capacity building addressing non-traditional security issues threats, including, climate change, disaster prevention, infectious diseases including pandemics, illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, illicit trade, and cyber crimes, human trafficking, smuggling and trafficking of firearms and ammunition, as well as in the areas of humanitarian emergencies such as floods, droughts and landslides, and ensuring food, water and energy security and ensuring food, water and energy security.
- 1.4 Strengthen cooperation on public health to address the challenges posed by COVID-19 and ensure social and economic recovery by promoting information sharing, experience exchanges and cooperation in scientific field, community-based public health intervention as well as joint research, and development, engage in policy dialogue and exchanges on epidemics control and treatment, ensuring equitable access to vaccines and medicines, strengthening collective response and resilience to future public health emergencies. Support the important role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the global response to the spread of COVID-19, and oppose any form of discrimination, stigmatization, racism and xenophobia in our response to the pandemic. Cooperation and exchanges among the respective Centers for Disease Control and other relevant institutions in the region and their contacts with ASEAN and the World Health Organization on public health will also be enhanced, as designate a new contact point of MLC, so as to protect peoples' health, safety and the socio-economic development of the six countries, contribute to build a Mekong-Lancang Community of Health.
- 1.5 Facilitate experts, business managers, high-skilled labour exchanges and maintain the stability of production and supply chains through enhanced connectivity, trade and investment facilitation, promote digital technology and innovation such as e-commerce and digital economy, promote discussion the launch of the MLC network of "fast lane" and "green channel" to facilitate personnel exchanges and maintain the stability of industrial and supply chains, so as to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the social-economic development of the Mekong-Lancang countries.

II. **Enhancing Partnership on Economic and Sustainable Development Cooperation**

The Economic and Sustainable Development Pillar reflects an essential component and the main driving force for the MLC Cooperation toward regional development and economic growth. In order to sustain the growth trajectory and bring tangible benefit to the people and prosperity for all, the MLC calls for enhancing hard and soft infrastructure connectivity and facilities, deepening industrial restructuring and urbanization, unimpeded trade, financial integration, promoting Information and Communication Technology, science, technology and innovation, enhancing environment protection, sustainable energy generation and utilization, agriculture competitiveness and poverty reduction, integrated rural development and a better cooperation between the government and the private sector. Therefore, we endeavor to support the following measures:

- 2.1 Strengthen *intra* Mekong-Lancang countries connectivity and *inter* regional connectivity by developing MLC plan on connectivity cooperation to reinforce trade, investment, power connectivity, industry, science and technology, innovation, infrastructure, transportation facility, and aviation, road, rail linkages, tourism and people-to-people linkages of the six countries in complementarity with the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity 2025. Enhance financial support to Mekong-Lancang regional connectivity by Mekong-Lancang Inter-Bank Cooperation Mechanism for connectivity.
- 2.2 Encourage synergy between the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and the Mekong-Lancang Economic Development Belt taking into account the need to aligning with the economic and development strategies and the comparative strengths of the respective Mekong-Lancang countries, enhancing trade connectivity, economic resilience and industrial integration, accelerate MLC countries' industrialization, modernization and innovation during the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution.
- 2.3 Reinforce efforts in strengthen cooperation in rural development and poverty eradication throughout the Mekong-Lancang region in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Cooperation Initiative on Poverty Reduction in East Asia via efficiently and effectively implementation of the projects under MLC Special Fund, Pilot Projects of Poverty Reduction Cooperation in East Asia as well as other cooperation projects in poverty reduction.
- 2.4 Intensify efforts to finalise the Five-Year Development Plan for MLC Cross-Border Economic Cooperation with a view to enhancing cross-border economic cooperation among the member countries in such areas as trade, investment, regional power trade, e-commerce, economic and technical cooperation, industrial park development, cross-border economic

cooperation zone, manufacturing and trade facilitation. Countries may select at least one cross border cooperation zone to develop as a role model of best practice.

- 2.5 Finalize the *Three-Year Action Plan on Production Capacity Cooperation among Mekong-Lancang countries* in accordance with the *Joint Statement on Production Capacity Cooperation among Mekong-Lancang Countries*, along with implementing the Multi-Nation Multi-Park cooperation, with a view to promoting investment, job creation, capacity building, poverty reduction, technical and innovation cooperation, enhancing MLC members industrial transformation and their standing in the regional and global value chain as well as optimizing regional productivity distribution, taking into account proper business code of conduct, international practices, the win-win principles for mutual benefits and win-win results and the complementarity between local, national and regional development strategies.
- 2.6 Further strengthen cooperation on sustainable management and utilization of water resources: convene Ministerial Meetings of Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation and fully harness MLC Water Resources Cooperation Joint Working Group as the coordination mechanism of decision making for this area, and the Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation Center as the supporting platform. Promote the implementation of *Five-Year Action Plan on Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation (2018-2022)*; conducting policy dialogues, sharing of data, information and experiences in the implementation of transboundary water resources management, enhancing technical cooperation and exchanges, carrying out joint researches and analysis related to Mekong-Lancang water resources, public participation in the exchange of views, and promoting capacity building in water management and enhancing pragmatic cooperation in such areas as climate change adaptation, dam safety, drinking water safety, flood and drought disaster management. Support establishment of Mekong-Lancang Water Resources Cooperation Information Sharing Platform.
- 2.7 Encourage further regional green and sustainable development by implementing the *Mekong-Lancang Environmental Cooperation Strategy* and the *Green Lancang-Mekong Initiative*, with a view to contributing to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In particular, strengthen environmental policy cooperation both among environmental departments and cross sectors through inter alia roundtable dialogues; establish capacity building partnerships and enhance pragmatic cooperation on climate change and air quality improvement, ecosystem management and biodiversity conservation, as well as urban environmental governance environmental conduct all these pertinent activities among MLC countries with the support of the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center.

- 2.8 Accelerate the implementation of the *Three-Year Plan of Action on Mekong Lancang Agricultural Cooperation (2020-2022)* to promote closer agriculture exchanges and cooperation among member countries in advancing green, sustainable, and innovative agriculture development in the region. Continue to utilize the Lancang-Mekong Agricultural Cooperation Center in China, as a platform for MLC member countries to enhance the cooperation in agricultural science and technology transfer exchanges, capacity building and knowledge sharing, joint research, investment and trade cooperation, and promote sustainable agriculture development, supporting production capacity of green agricultural products in the Mekong-Lancang region.
- 2.9 Further promote engagement between the public and private sectors, involving especially MSMEs and young entrepreneurs, and woman entrepreneurs with the focus on promoting the use of digital technology and facilitating access to financial resource to realize potential investment and business opportunities in various Mekong-Lancang countries, as well as enhance better interaction and stronger linkages among Mekong-Lancang businesspeople by way of exploring an opportunity to establish the MLC Investment Promotion Forum and the creation of development of Mekong-Lancang business council to stimulate frequent holding of trade and investment promotion activities such as organizing international trade and investment fairs, road shows, exhibitions, and business-matching sessions.
- 2.10 Encourage science and technology cooperation among MLC countries. Strengthen the intellectual cooperation among members particularly in the forms of joint-research and development projects, form, and joint workshops in various topics in order to enhance economic growth in environmentally-friendly manner and to find the most appropriate solutions for environmental risk with concrete plan of action in economic cooperation among MLC countries.
- 2.11 Encourage further cooperation in finance and experience sharing on the use of local currencies in sub-regional trade and investment in order to promote healthy growth of the regional economy as well as explore new ways to cooperate in investment financing that can support infrastructure development in the Mekong-Lancang countries, while leveraging existing financial mechanisms offered by international financial institutions and facilities such as the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the World Bank among others.
- 2.12 Strengthen cooperation in new growth areas such as digital economy, artificial intelligence, to support socio-economic recoveries of the MLC Member States from the impact of the COVID-19 situation and to promote long-term sustainable economic growth.

III. **Enhancing Partnership on Social, Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges**

The Mekong-Lancang countries, which are geographically linked and bounded by the shared river, diversified and unique traditions, cultures and local values, which enjoy good neighborliness and strong friendship for decades. Therefore, we endeavor to support the following measures:

- 3.1 Enhance greater people-to-people connectivity through education, intellectual, tourism cooperation, information and broadcasting cooperation and cultural exchanges, taking into account the value of inherited heritage in respective MLC countries.
- 3.2 Strengthen the educational cooperation and exchanges among the six MLC member countries promote cooperation among universities and colleges in Mekong–Lancang region, encourage joint training and research programs, academic exchange and explore a mechanism for mutual recognition and encourage the cooperation of credit exchange among colleges and universities, with an aim of increasing high-quality human resource development, educational and life-long learning exchanges, so as to reduce on the one hand the human resources development gap and on the other hand to build a future generation of competitive workforce in the region that can responds to the needs of the marketplace and social development during the 4th Industrial Revolution era.
- 3.3 Further explore an intellectual cooperation exchange model that incorporates government, business, academia, research and think tanks, media, women and youth to provide innovative ideas to support the long-term development of the MLC.
- 3.4 Strengthen *intra* MLC tourism cooperation through the promotion of green, sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, agri-tourism, sport tourism and cultural and heritage tourism, gastronomy and community-based leading to the establishment of the Mekong-Lancang Tourist Cities Cooperation Alliance and explore the possibility of establishing a medium/long term tourism development vision of the MLC, and build a stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism economy. Encourage and involve youths in tourism products development and promotion activities.
- 3.5 Promote cultural exchanges and cooperation on culture and arts through cultural organizations, artists and cultural tourists, as well as continue to explore the possibility of building a Mekong Lancang cultural exchange platform.
- 3.6 Promote the utilization of the existing tourism arrangement among the Mekong-Lancang countries including self-driving tour, more air carriers and direct flights connecting regional destinations, travel facilities by reducing unnecessary barriers (formalities) as well as

development tourism historical route/corridors connectivity to promote ancient capitals, cultural heritage sites and promotion of Buddhist Pilgrimage Tour.

- 3.7 Explore a possibility to create a new Joint Working Group on Information and Broadcasting Sector under the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation with its main task to promote mutual understanding and better coordination for the promotion of social, cultural and economic development, as well as combating fake news and misinformation in the sub-region and beyond.

IV. **Enhancing Partnership on MLC Cooperation Mechanism**

- 4.1 Continue to optimize the existing multi-layered framework comprising of Leaders' Meeting, Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM), Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) and Diplomatic and Sectoral Joint Working Group Meeting in order to improve policy planning and effective coordination as well as shaping the long-term strategic planning of the MLC development.
- 4.2 Strengthen communication and coordination among the MLC National Secretariats/Coordination Units of the six MLC member countries as well as reinforcing the capacity of their staffs so as to ensure the effective implementation of the MLC 5-Year Plan of Action and MLC Projects.
- 4.3 Finalize the Plans of Action in each priority area, which will serve as a guiding document to better facilitate related cooperation and project implementation as well as effectively implement to the *MLC 5-Year Plan of Action (2018-2022)* with a view to supporting socio-economic development and generating tangible benefit to the people in the region.
- 4.4 Efficiently utilize the LMC Special Fund and effectively implement the cooperation projects noted by the Third Leaders' Meeting as Annex. Improve the quality of projects and efficiency of implementation and encourage the Fund to support more practical and effective projects for the well-being of the peoples. Mobilize other financial resources from the governments, business sector as well as international financial institutions to support priority projects and initiatives that are aligned with the Leaders' vision and the Foreign Ministers' directions.
- 4.5 Promote public awareness of MLC through various activities as well as commemoration of the annual MLC Week during the week of 23 March, as inspired by the holding of the First MLC Leaders' Meeting was held in 2016 in China.
