

(Unofficial Translation)

Press Statement

by H.E. General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

for the 1st Mekong-ROK Summit

at BEXCO Convention Center, Busan, The Republic of Korea

27 November 2019

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Dear Members of the Press,

1. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency Moon Jae-In, President of the Republic of Korea, as well as all the related agencies which have contributed to the success of today's historical Summit. The elevation of the Mekong – ROK Cooperation to the Leaders' level clearly adds value to the success of the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit. I'm indeed very pleased with the outcomes we have achieved.

2. After its inception 8 years ago, we now concurred that Mekong – ROK Cooperation is among the most dynamic in the sub-region. We commended the ROK's commitment and clear vision in developing a systematic and pragmatic working mechanism. We appreciated President Moon's announcement to further promote synergy with ACMECS as well as welcome the ROK's pledge of

one million USD to the ACMECS Development Fund. We will encourage other development partner to do the same.

3. Today, we have adopted the Mekong – Han Declaration which was initiated by the ROK to serve as Strategy and Action Plan for our joint endeavors in the sub-region. The Declaration is well in line with President Moon's New Southern Policy and his vision on Mekong – ROK Cooperation announced last September. Furthermore, it complements the ACMECS Master Plan for Sustainable Development in the Mekong sub-region. I also commended the ROK to have introduced four key elements namely; clear Action Plan, Funding from the Mekong – ROK Cooperation Fund, Coordinating Agency which is the Mekong Institute (MI) and a parallel mechanism which is the private sector participation through Mekong – ROK Business Forum. This clearly reflects the story commitment of the ROK towards the riparian countries.

4. I have proposed 3 main points in line with the 3 Pillars of the New Southern Policy namely;

5. First, on People, Thailand will support closer people-to-people exchange between the ROK and the Mekong countries through education cooperation. We have set a target to double the student exchange between the Mekong riparian Countries and the ROK within the next 5 year or to increase by 20 percent each year. We also proposed more activities to further promote the people-to-people exchanges such as those of academics and lecturers. Thailand, thus, supported the ROK's initiative on 'cultural and education exchange year' in 2021 to celebrate our 10th anniversary.

6. The challenges from the aging society is indeed very relevant. In this regard, Thailand supports the universal health coverage (UHC) which echoes the ROK's plan in the Mekong sub-region. In this regard, Thailand is ready to share our experience with member countries.

7. Second, on Prosperity, I consider multidimensional connectivity is instrumental to achieving sustainable growth and development. Connectivity will integrate countries in the sub-region into the global value and supply chain. This calls for the need to promote technology and innovation to increase our production capacity in the 4IR. In this connection, I have proposed a closer experience sharing between the ROK and Mekong particularly in the areas of digital technology with a view to empower our SMEs and MSMEs to be better equipped with necessary skills for e-commerce. We should also make use of the Mekong-ROK Business Forum to enhance capacity building for them.

8. Thailand hosted the 7th Mekong-ROK Business Forum under the theme “Enhancing SMEs Innovation Capacity for Sustainable Development” last October in Bangkok. In this regard, I congratulated our private sectors who had successfully established the Mekong-ROK Business Council yesterday. This will contribute to closer cooperation among them.

9. Third, on Peace, Thailand agrees with the ROK on the non-traditional challenges which can affect peace and security in the region, namely environmental problems, climate change, water resource and disaster management. I also purposed that the sub-region makes full use of the ROK’s modern space and Geographic Information technologies for the effective forecast of floods and droughts and for long term water resources management. We also commended the ROK for establishing the Mekong-ROK Water Resource Joint Research Center in the ROK. The Mekong River can be compared to the main blood vessel of the Mekong member countries and we shall mutually benefit from closer cooperation.

10. Furthermore, on regional and global issues; I have emphasized the importance of maintaining peace, stability and prosperity in the region. We realize that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is important to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region and the world at large. We, therefore, strictly adhere to the United Nations Resolutions and related international obligations regarding the Korean Peninsula.

11. Lastly, I would like to commend President Moon once again for successfully co-hosting this Inaugural Summit in the most friendly atmosphere. We, member states, are committed to enhance our cooperation to promote sustainable socio-economic growth. We further congratulate Viet Nam on becoming the next co-chair for 2020.

Thank you.

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