

Mekong River Basin and Trans-boundary Cooperation



FIRST RHINE-MEKONG SYMPOSIUM

"CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON WATER AND RELATED SECTORS"

8-9 May 2014, Koblenz, Germany

Truong Hong Tien
Director of the Environment Division
Mekong River Commission

Presentation Outline

1

- Mekong River Basin

2

- History of Cooperation

3

- Achievements

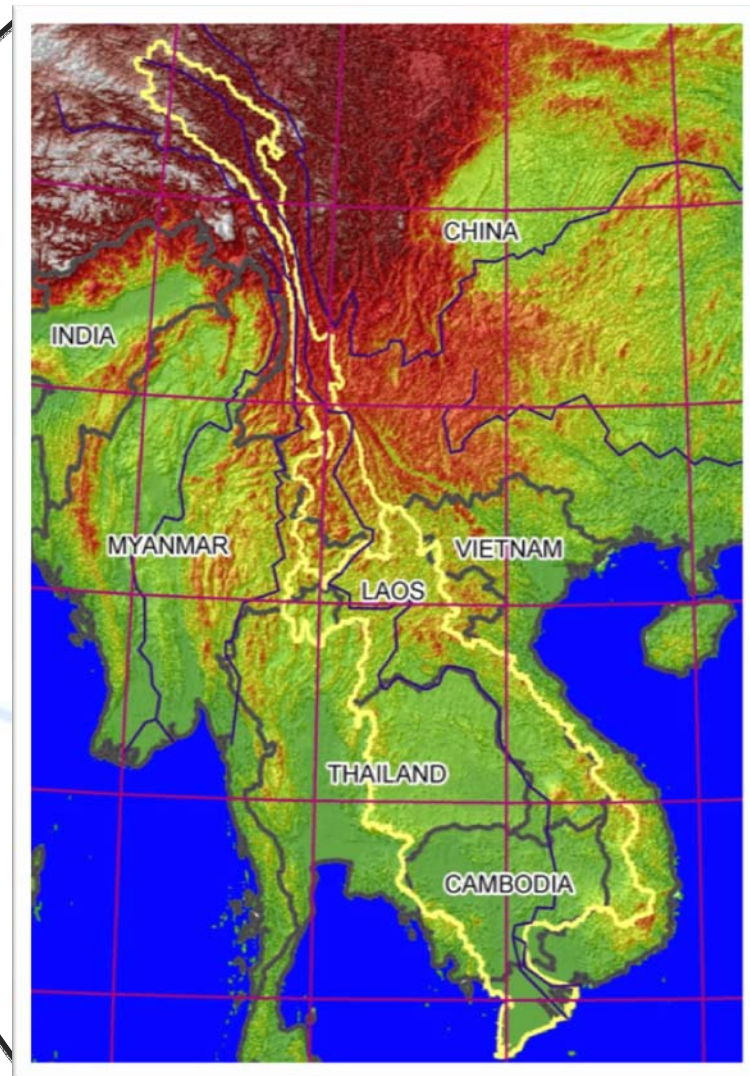
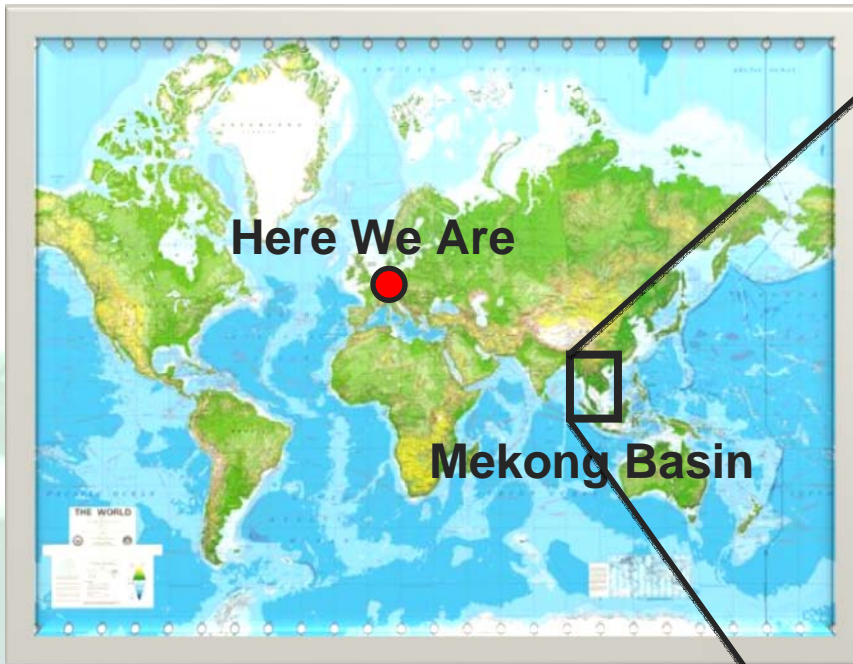
4

- Opportunities and Challenges

5

- Way Ahead

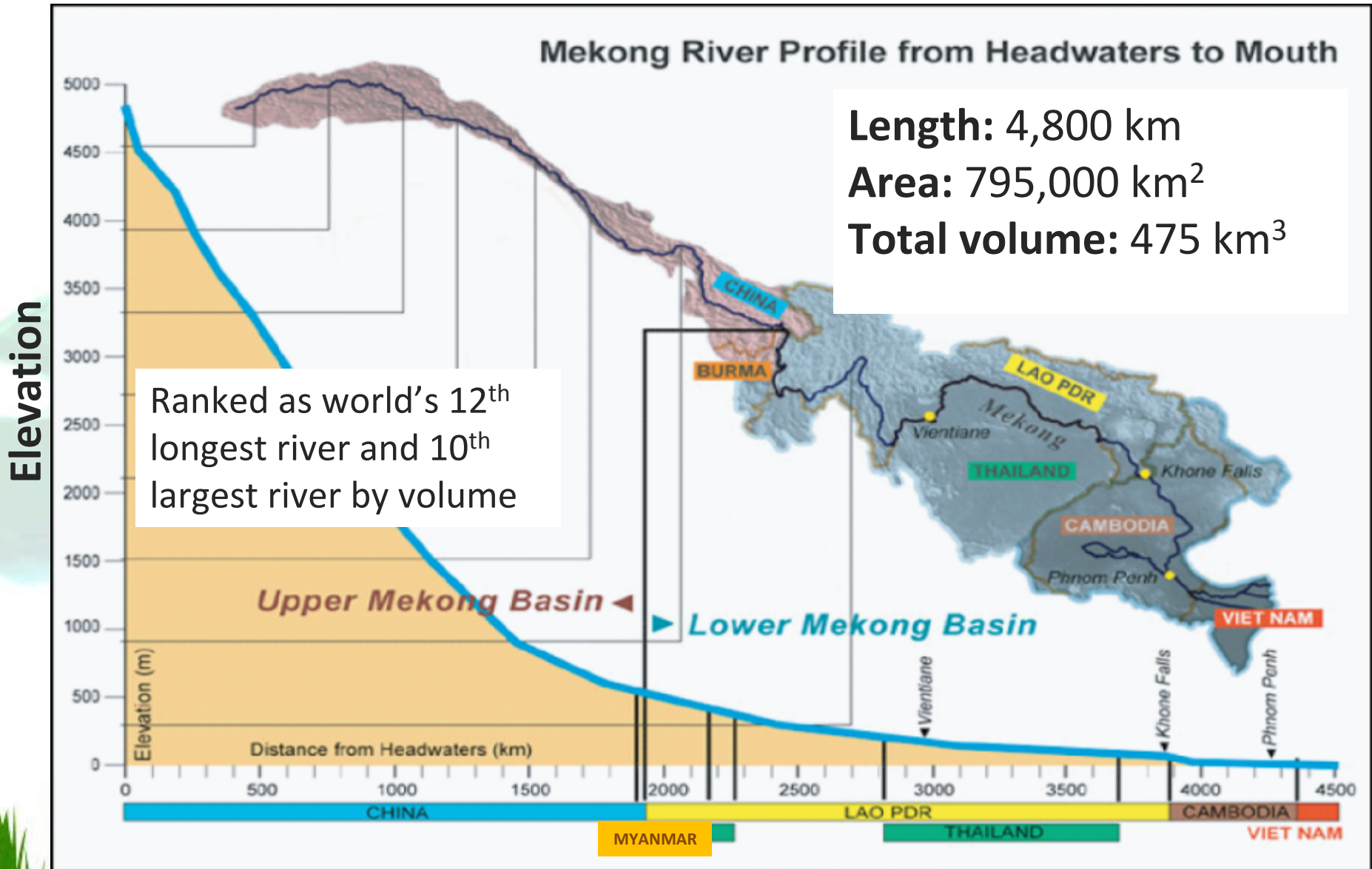
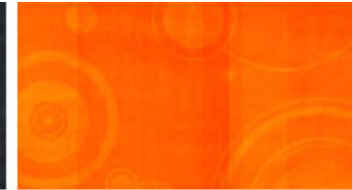
Mekong River Basin



A transboundary river basin of six countries:

China, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam

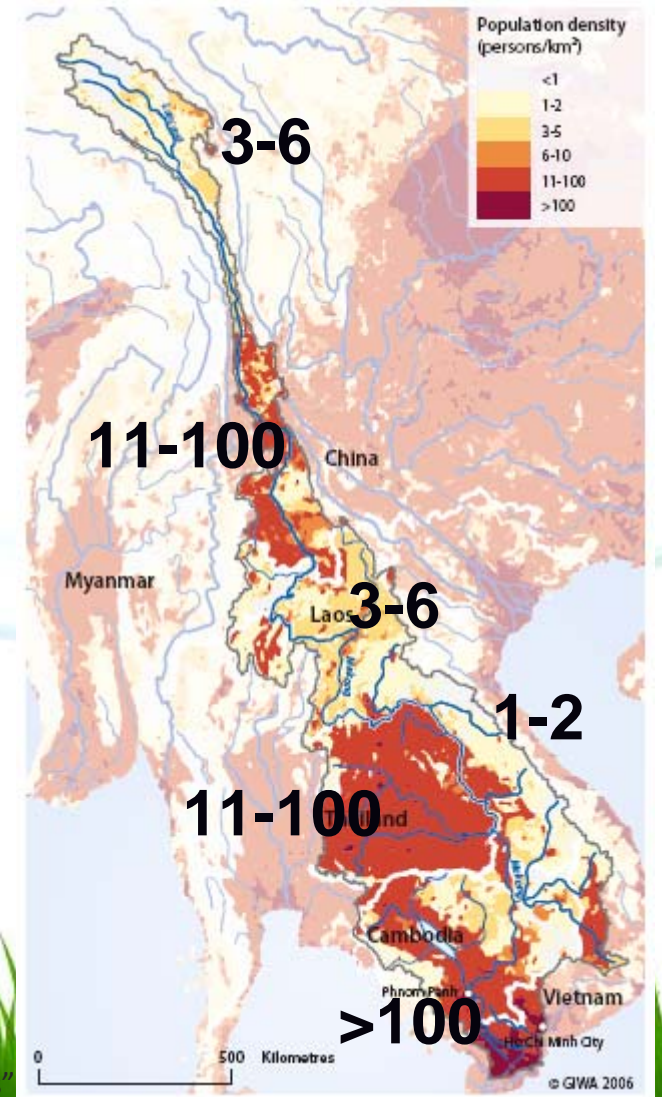
Size and Profile



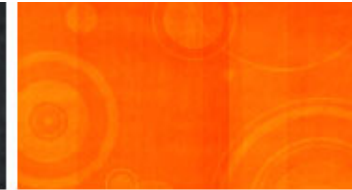
Population and Livelihood

- ❖ About 70% of 66 million population are rural people and highly depended on rivers and natural resources partially agriculture and fishery sectors
- ❖ About 17 million of 66 million population are poor

Population density (person/km²)



Rich Ecosystem and Biodiversity

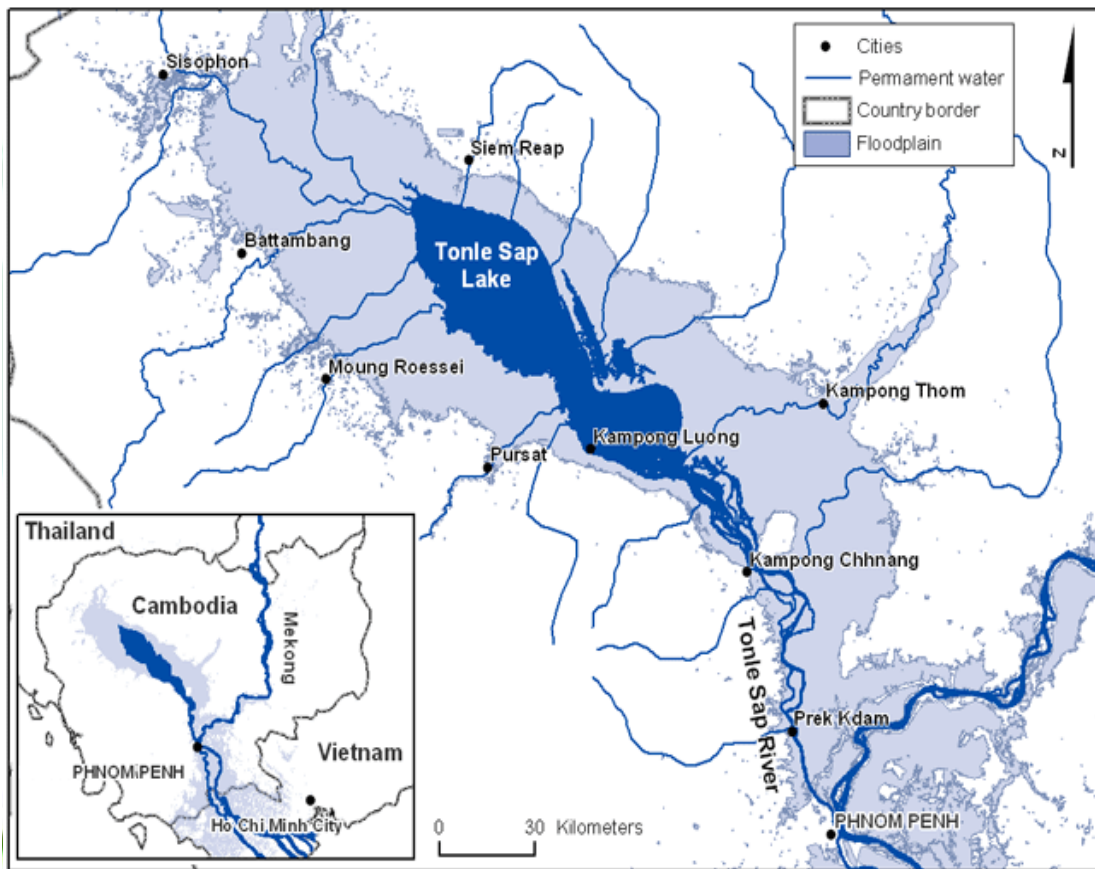


Fishes ~ 850 species
Birds ~ 1,200 species
Plants ~ 20,000 species

“Giant River”

Tonle Sap (Great Lake)

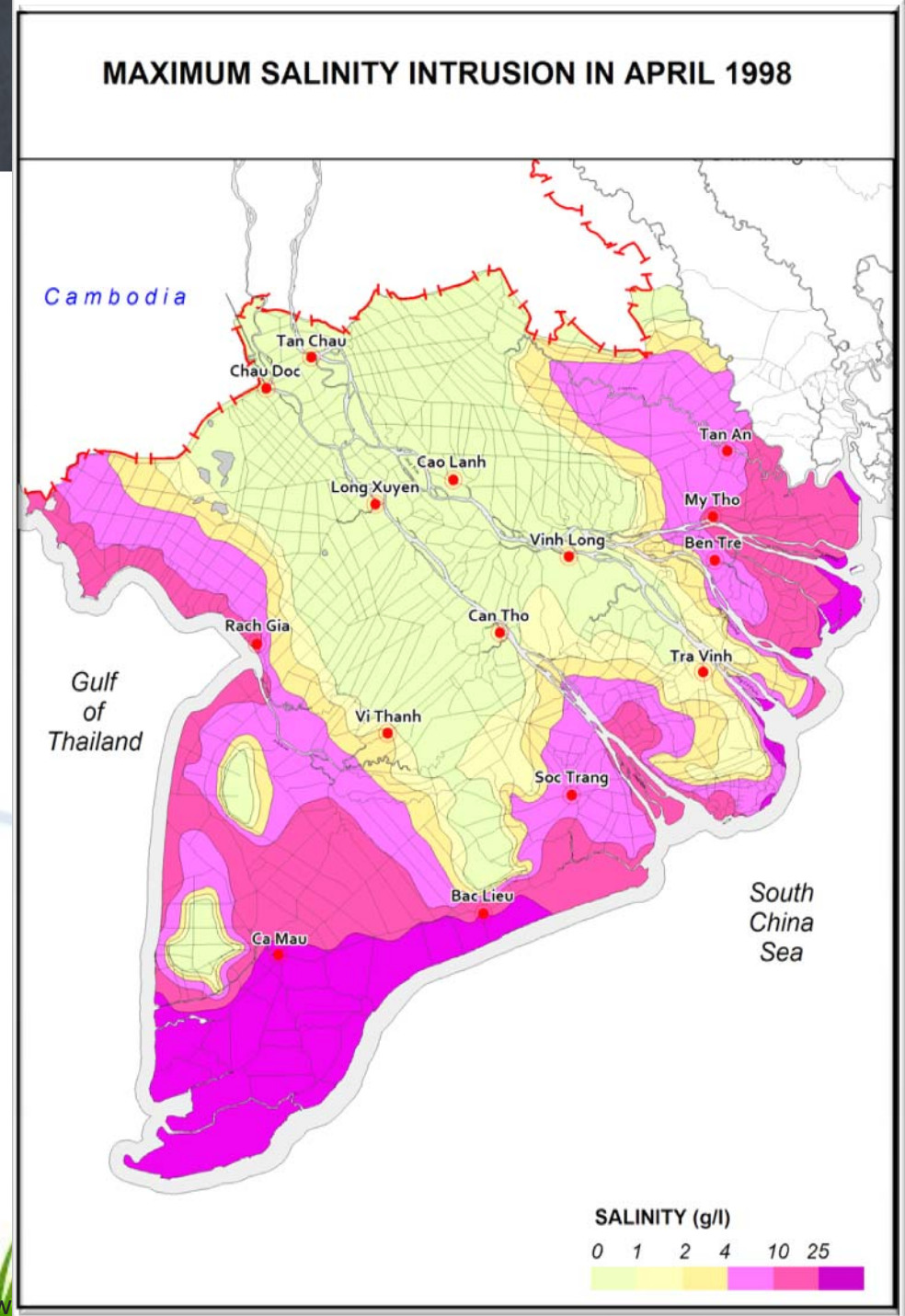
“ The lake functions as a natural storage reservoir for Mekong floodwater. Great Lake System represent one of the world’s most productive ecosystems. This river-lake system supports the world’s largest freshwater fishery.”



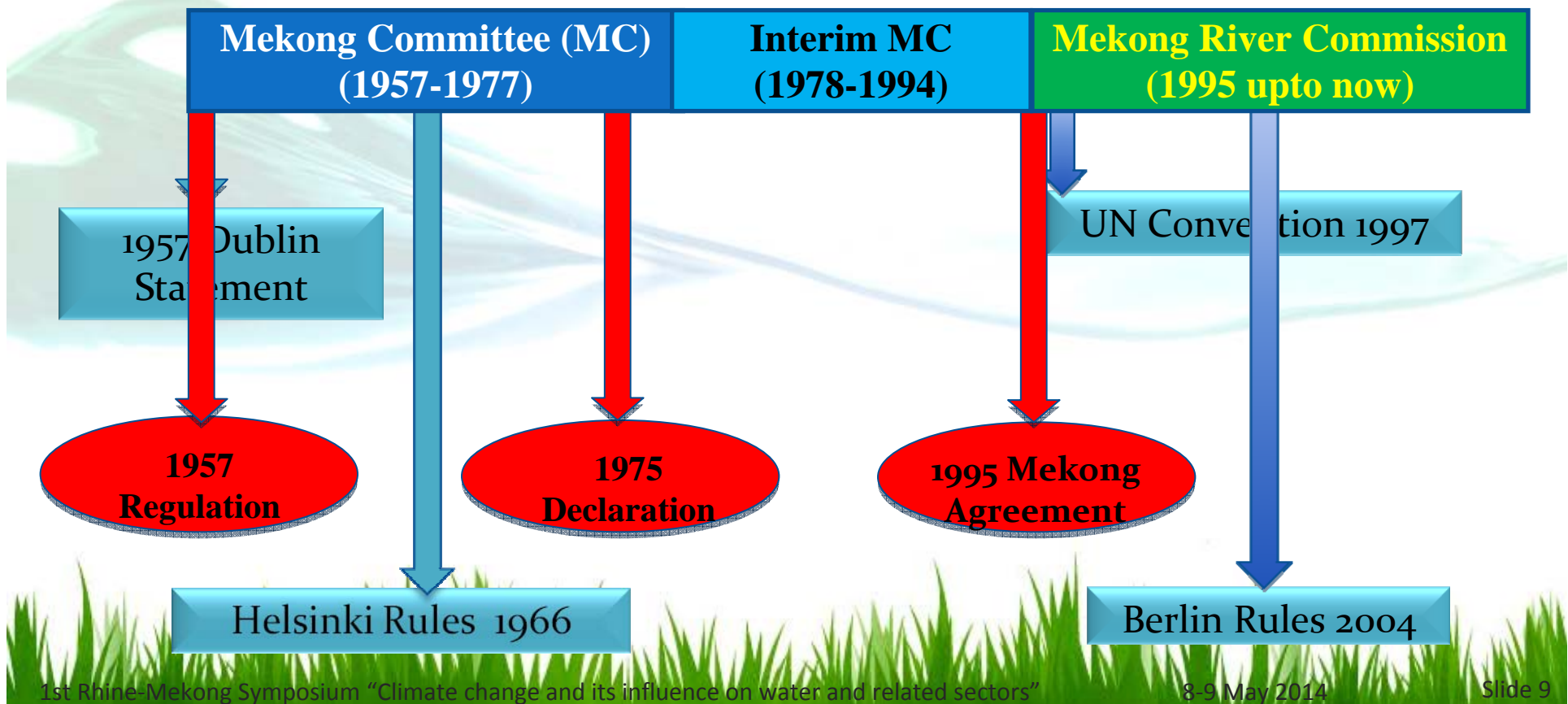
- The area of the lake increases from a dry season average of 2,500 km² to a typical flood season area of 15,000 km².
- Typically mean depth increases from 1 m to 6 - 9 m.
- Total volume is upto 80 km³ during the flood season.

Mekong Delta

- ❖ High density of population
- ❖ One of the world's largest rice production regions
- ❖ People are at risk from the sea level raise and salinity intrusion



History of Mekong Cooperation



1995 Mekong Agreement

- To cooperate in all fields of sustainable development, utilisation, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin ...
...including, but not limited to irrigation, hydro-power, navigation, flood control, fisheries, timber floating, recreation and tourism...
- To protect the environment, natural resources, aquatic life and conditions, and ecological balance of the Mekong River Basin from pollution or other harmful effects...



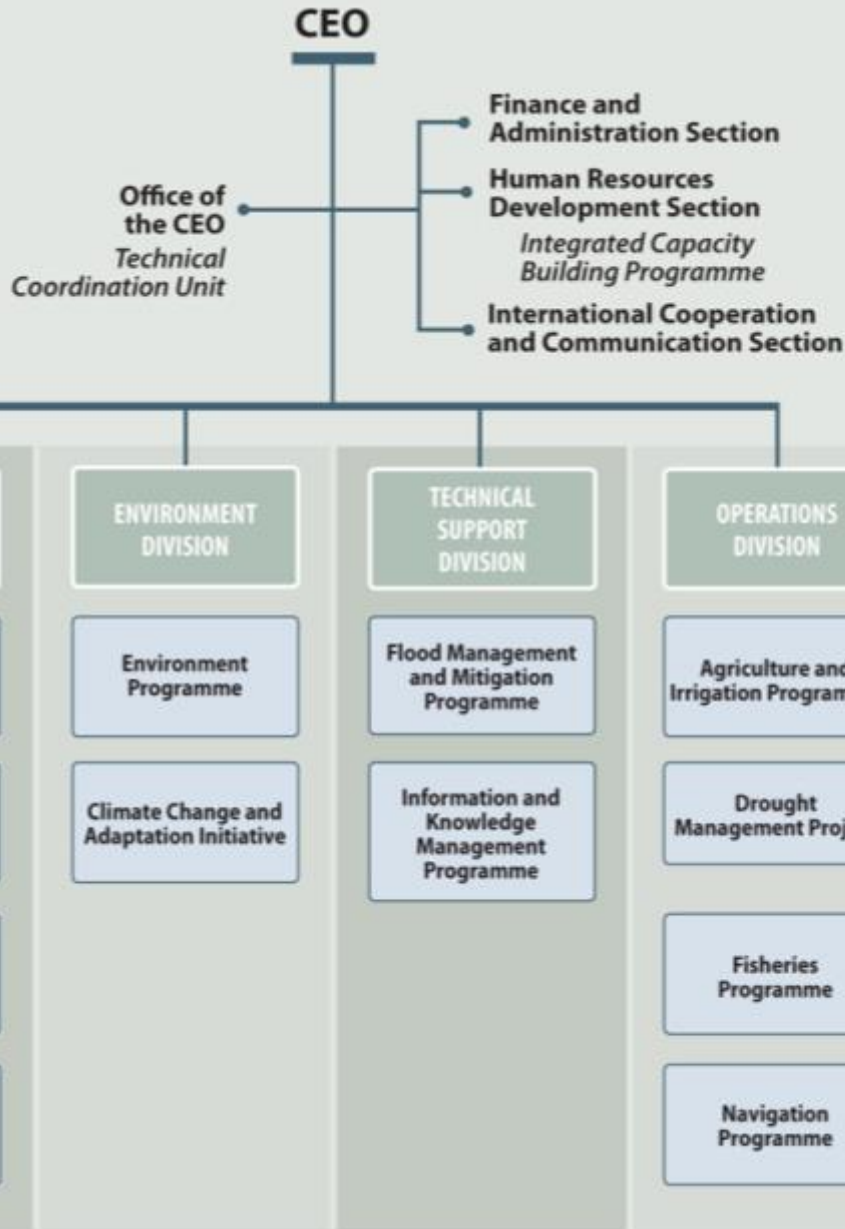
Mekong River Commission (MRC)

- **Vision of the MRB:** “An economically prosperous, socially just and environmentally sound Mekong River Basin”;
- **Vision for the MRC:** “A world class, financially secure, International River Basin Organisation serving the Mekong countries to achieve the Basin Vision”;
- **Mission of the MRC:** “To promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries' mutual benefit and the people's well-being.”

Mekong River Commission Governance Structure



Operational Structure of the MRCs



Secretariat facilitates regional meetings of the Member Countries and provides technical advice on joint planning, coordination and cooperation.

It also works closely with the four countries' coordinating bodies, the National Mekong Committees (NMCs), and other state agencies for sustainable development and management of the basin

Current State of Cooperation (1)

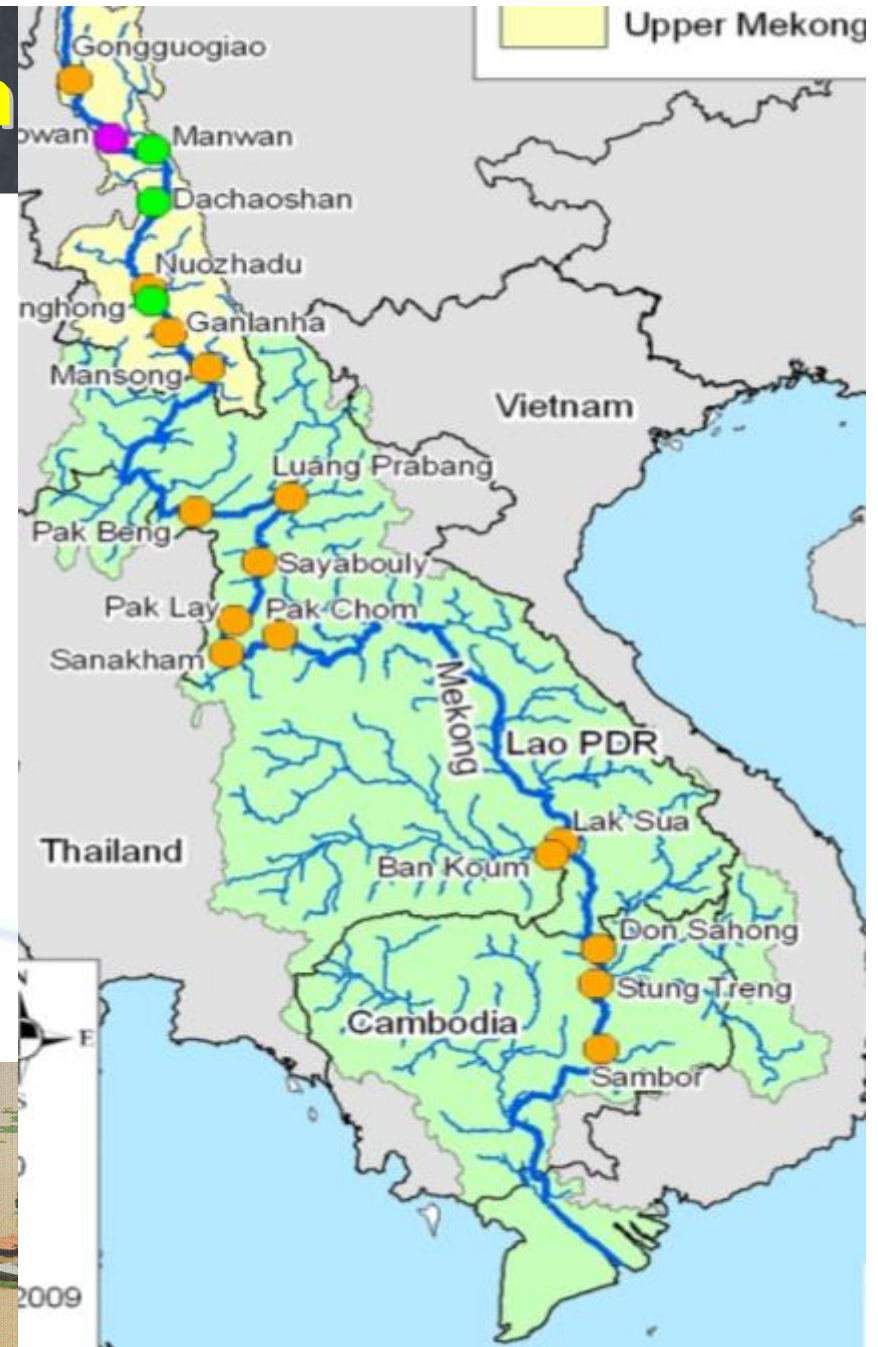
- ❑ Sign of 1995 Mekong Agreement;
- ❑ Adoption of a set of procedures for information exchange, water use monitoring, maintaining minimum flows, notification and consultation on water use projects, and maintaining water quality;
- ❑ Adoption of integrated water resources management based Basin development strategy and of Decision Support Framework;

Current State of Cooperation (2)

- ❑ Development of a Framework on trans-boundary Environmental Impact Assessment (TbEIA);
- ❑ Support for implementation of bilateral agreements for promotion of free navigation;
- ❑ Regional fisheries management; flood early warning and forecasting system;

Challenges for Cooperation

- Increased water demand for economic development; climate change; natural disasters;
- Differences in priority of water use; Different level of economic development; and process of harmonization of national and regional regulations.



Opportunities for cooperation (1)

- Highest political commitment to implement the 1995 Mekong Agreement that reflects a desire to promote the development of the Mekong river basin in a sustainable manner;
- Common challenges (Increased water demand for economic development, climate change, natural disasters) has fostered collective response to minimize the negative impacts through cooperation;

Opportunities for cooperation (2)

- Long friendship; trend of globalization; and tendency of international water cooperation;
- Two upper countries are currently playing as dialogue partners; more dialogues may help to engage two upstream countries in the Mekong cooperation;
- Continued support of the development partners to the MRC toward the riparianization and decentralization process.

Way Ahead (1)

- Effectively implement of 1995 Mekong Agreement through the implementation of the set of procedures; and integrate the results into the national systems;
- Enhance dialogues at all levels; and increase data/information sharing among the MRC member countries;
- Increase ownership (financially sustained by MRC by 2030, riparianization, decentralization), reform the MRC Secretariat;

Way Ahead (2)

- Strengthen the regional cooperation, integrate the MRC activities with the regional initiatives;
- Explore new approach (Nexus, Green Growth) in trans-boundary water management;
- Increase participatory involvement of stakeholders in decision making process.

**Thank you very much for
your attention**

