

(Translation)

Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces
Office of the Mekong-Lanna River Basin Network for the Preservation of Natural Resources and Culture
62 Moo 8 Ban Wiang Kaew, Chiang Khong District, Chiang Rai

12 September 2014

Subject: Disclosure of information regarding the Mekong-Lancang River dams and suspension of remaining dam projects for further study on transboundary impacts and mitigation

ATT: His Excellency the President of the People's Republic of China

CC: President of the Hydro Lancang Corporation

Dear Sir,

Originating in China, Mekong River flows into five downstream countries and helps to feed at least sixty millions of people, particularly in the Lower Mekong River Basin. It is indeed our bloodlines and provides for the rich biodiversity and ecology of the whole river basin and region giving us foods, water, fishery, navigation, sources of income and culture.

But in the past eighteen years since the first dam, the Manwan, was built on the Lancang or the upper reach of Mekong in Yunnan Province, people inhabiting along the river, particularly those living along the Thailand-Laos border in the province of Chiang Rai, have experienced changes of the Mekong ecology which have become more drastic over the time. The riverlevel fluctuates severely and unnaturally and it affects directly the livelihoods and security of community and has even given rise to incidences of havoc and off-season flash floods and drought.

Rapid changes of the Mekong's water level in Chiang Rai have taken place many a time. In one week, the fluctuation can be different as many as three meters or ten centimeters in just one day. We believe the incidences could not be attributed to global warming, but it has occurred since there was the first dam of the upper reach of the Mekong, where six dams have already been constructed to date.

Previously, it has been cited frequently that only 16-18% of the Mekong water is from China. However, this is the volume in the whole basin measured at the delta in Vietnam. But for us who live along the river in Northern Thailand, we are aware that up to 90-95% and 70-75% of the volume of water in the Mekong right at the Golden Triangle in Chiang Saeng District, Chiang Rai, derives from China during rainy season and dry season, respectively. Therefore, any intervention with the river in Yunnan shall invariably bear effect downstream.

In the past week, we have heard that the company that operates Jinghong Dam sent a letter to inform the port authority in Jinghong regarding the rise of water tide in the dam due to extensive precipitation as a result of which a lot more of run-offs will be discharged during 4-30 September. Thus, Chiang Rai port authority informed the District Chief Officer of Chiang Saen in a letter on 5 September. Such news has caused grave concern among us who live by the river in Thailand as the lowest dam, the Jinghong Dam, located above Chiang Rung, Sipsongpanna, is just approximately 340 kilometers away from the Golden Triangle at the Thailand border. No one can give us an answer as to how long, how many hours it will take for a massive volume of water to arrive here if the water has to be discharged from the dam and how much it will contribute to the water level here.

Upon hearing news about the massive run-offs, local residents in Chiang Saen District have become panic and decided to move their electric appliances and valuable belongings up to the second floor of their houses. It has led to widespread fear and apprehension including those living off fish culture in the Mekong River in Nong Khai province, fishers and farmers growing vegetables along the river in Northeastern Thailand.

We, the Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces, are composed of community organizations and civil society organizations and have been monitoring developments in the Mekong. We have found that until now, there has been no genuine effort made to sufficiently disclose information regarding the dam on the Lancang-Mekong to keep downstream countries informed. As result, we have been living dangerously and have no idea when the severe havocs will happen to us and how to prevent them.

Therefore, we urge that you disclose and keep the five governments of the downstream countries informed of essential information regarding the existing six dams on the Mekong River including the volume of water in the reservoir, the discharge volume of the run-off, and other relevant data. It should bring about transparency of information and should facilitate any attempt to develop early warning system to prevent any imminent damage in future.

As for other dam projects which are being constructed or planned on the Lancang River, we urge that you bring to a halt all these projects pending comprehensive transboundary impact study including the Strategic Impact Assessment of all the cascade dams to be developed in the upper reach of the Mekong, particularly hydrological impact, impact on the water flow, sedimentation, and fish migration in order to make possible the sustainable use of the shared river and peace in the region, as well as to develop mitigation measures to cope with downstream impacts from the existing dams.

We hope that you share with us that the Mekong is an international river and a lifeline of the whole region. It is so essential to millions of people whose livelihood has been dependent on its ecology and natural resources since time immemorial.

Please consider this matter at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Network of Thai People in Eight Mekong Provinces

To Embassy of The People's Republic of China in The Kingdom of Thailand
57 Ratchadaphisek Road, Bangkok 10400, Thailand

CC: Hydro Lancang Corporation
1 Century City Mid Road, Guandu District, Kunming, Yunnan, China 650214