



JOINT-STATEMENT

CSOs Applaud the Cambodian Government for its Commitment to No Mainstream Dam.

Phnom Penh, 22th December 2023 - We, civil society organizations (CSOs) working in the field of natural resource management, water governance, and climate change extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Ministry of Environment (MOE) for steadfastly upholding its strong commitment to the prohibiting hydropower dam construction on the Mekong Mainstream at the 28th Conference of Parties (COP) held in Dubai United Arab Emirate from 30 November- 13 December 2023.

The government's reaffirmation of its commitment to refrain from constructing hydropower dams on the Mekong River is a positive development that would crucially contribute to addressing the growing concerns over the current detrimental alteration of the Mekong River and its ecosystem sustainability. The Mekong River has been under critical state since 2019, characterized by low water flow, which has severe consequences. The Mekong River Commission (MRC) has recorded the lowest water flow level in its history in the monsoon season in 2019-2021¹. This alarming situation has resulted in fish yield decline and rice yield drop, affecting millions of people who have been relying on the resources from the river. The NGO Forum on Cambodia reported a decline of the total freshwater fishes in the value of around 10.50% in 2019 and 22% in 2020 compared to the baseline data in 2018². This effect has persisted due to the low flow condition.

The local communities in Stung Treng province have recently witnessed a noticeable change in the flow pattern of the Mekong River. Located approximately 5 km downstream of Don Sahong Hydropower dam, Kroam Village in Preah Rumkel commune, Borei Osvay Sen Chey district, was once an attractive eco-tourism destination, renowned by its breathtaking flooded forest landscape. However, over the last few years the flooded forest has experienced devastation and collapse. The local community estimates that about 50% of the flooded forest in Kroam village have deteriorated and collapsed. Despite the identification of the operation of the upstream dam as a significant concern, no investigation has been conducted to address this issue. Local "community-

¹ MRC (June 2021) Situation Report: Dry season hydrological conditions in the Lower Mekong River Basin.

² NGO Forum on Cambodia (2021) Final report: Assessing Low Water Flow's Impact on the Mekong Riverine and Tonle Sap Communities.



led fish-catch monitoring” has found a significant decline of approximately 80% in household fish catch.

The wet season’s flood pulse of the Mekong River plays a crucial function in the reversing flow into The Tonle Sap Great Lake through the Tonle Sap River. However, the low flow of water from the Mekong River in recent years has caused a critical condition for the Lake. According to the report by the NGO Forum, the reverse flow of Tonle Sap Lake has gradually declined in the last ten years³ on average, causing low water level of the Tonle Sap Lake, and impacting the inundation area and fish habitat. The report further indicates that the water volume of the Tonle Sap Lake from the early of 2023 up to September 2023 has reduced by 50% compared with the Long Terms Average for the same period. The report also predicts a continuing downward trend in the water level of the Tonle Sap Lake.

The government's commitment responds to the unprecedented alteration observed in the Mekong in recent years and contributes to minimizing the impact on the riparian communities. We extend our utmost appreciation to the Royal Government of Cambodia for translating this commitment into a policy document and taking a step to fulfill the National Power Development Plan. The transition towards solar and wind energy options to meet the country’s rising power demands, as well as reaffirmation to phase out coal power plants, showcases Cambodia’s alignment with the global community in addressing the climate emergency.

Once again, we, the undersigned CSOs, express our appreciation to the government of Cambodia for this solid commitment. We kindly request relevant ministries adhered to implementation of its commitment.

For further information, please contact:

Mr. Mak Bunthoeurn, Program Manager
 The NGO Forum on Cambodia
 Mobil: (855) 12 396 050
 Email: bunthoeurn@ngoforum.org.kh

³ NGO Forum on Cambodia (2023) Impacts of a low flow of water from the Mekong River to Tonle Sap Lake on the livelihoods of different communities and natural environments.



List of NGOs endorse the statement

1. Action for Development (AFD)
2. Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA)
3. CHETTHOR
4. Coalition of Cambodia Fishers (CCF)
5. Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)
6. Kampuchea Women's welfare Action (KWWA)
7. Mlup Promviheathor Center Organization (MPC)
8. My Village Organization (MVI)
9. North-eastern Rural Development (NRD)
10. Nak Akphivath Sahakum (NAS)
11. NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF)
12. Oxfam in Cambodia
13. Rural Aid Organization (RAO)
14. Rural Friend Community for Development (RFCD)
15. Tonle Sap Lake Waterkeeper (TSW)
16. Women's Community Voices (WCV)
17. 3S Rivers Protection Network (3SPN)