

Press Releases: Remarks at the Lower Mekong Initiative Ministerial

Remarks

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SECRETARY POMPEO: Good afternoon, everyone. It's my pleasure to chair this year's Lower Mekong Initiative Ministerial Meeting. I appreciate you all being here today.

Before we begin, on behalf of the United States, I first want to offer condolences to the people of Laos for the tragic dam breach. I know this is now affecting other countries as well, and we are expressing our condolence to each of them, the people of your countries, and we want you to know that we are glad to work with the Lao Government and others to provide international resolutions and relief as part of this effort. Our condolences also go to the victims of the recent flooding and landslides in Myanmar. Tragedies like this show the importance of working together and supporting each other.

The Lower Mekong partner countries are important strategic partners for the United States of America. Our increased engagement in LMI has fueled sustainable development and strengthened ASEAN as an institution. Thanks to our teams, LMI has been increasingly responsive to the needs of this subregion, and so I want to commend each of you for your countries' contributions. Creating equitable, sustainable, inclusive growth for the subregion not only contributes to ASEAN countries and ASEAN's centrality, but also to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

A year ago, together we began talking about streamlining the LMI to make it more responsive to the needs of the subregion. Today, with your approval of the restructuring, we will increase the effectiveness of our cooperation. Thailand and Cambodia have both stepped up, volunteering to be the first co-chairs alongside the United States for the two new pillars of the LMI, which will tap into our combined resources and expertise to help achieve our joint priorities.

Allow me to highlight a few of our recent successes and new programs under the LMI. Our flagship education program, Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training, has given over 44,000 students access to opportunities to learn innovative skills in high demand in the private sector. Another training opportunity comes in the form of the U.S.-Singapore Third Country Training Program, which continues to strengthen ASEAN's capacity to address modern challenges ranging from cybersecurity to waste management. Our U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin working soon with your governments, regional institutions, and increasingly with the private sector to include cooperation on seed trade in the Lower Mekong.

I'm also pleased to announce the upcoming launch of our Public-Private Partnership training program for the Lower Mekong government officials to strengthen capacity to develop commercially sound proposals for infrastructure investment. I'm sure we'll start to see more of these public-private sector partnerships.

The Mekong Water Data Initiative, which we approved at this meeting last year, is also elevating collaboration among the friends of the Lower Mekong and the Mekong River Commission on the region's most valuable natural resource. Later today, we will approve the non-binding joint statement on water data management to mobilize resources that can achieve better collection analysis and sharing of water data. The donor members of the Friends of the Lower Mekong are particularly supportive of this commitment as they understand how crucial water data is to mitigating risks related to floods and droughts.

Through these and many other collaborative LMI partnerships, we can build a stronger and more resilient Mekong region together.

At this time, I'd like to thank the members of the media for their attention and kindly ask they depart so that we may continue our discussions.

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