

**PHNOM PENH DECLARATION
OF THE 9TH AYEYAWADY – CHAO PHRAYA – MEKONG
ECONOMIC COOPERATION STRATEGY SUMMIT
9th December 2020 via Video Conference**

“Partnership for Connectivity and Resilience”

1. We, the Heads of State/Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, virtually met on 9th December 2020 for the 9th Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Summit under the theme of **“Partnership for Connectivity and Resilience”**. The Secretary General of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was also present at the Summit.
2. We stressed the importance of the ACMECS sub-region as an integral part of the ASEAN Community and a strong engine of regional growth with immense economic potentials. ACMECS has a vast market of over 200 million people with rising incomes and a projected combined GDP of around US\$ 1 trillion in 2020, and strategic location at the junction of the enormous emerging markets of Asia forming a land bridge and transportation corridor between East and South Asia which are among the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world.
3. We noted with satisfaction that ACMECS evolved from the Bagan Declaration adopted in 2003 in Myanmar and, through the implementation of various plans of action, has contributed to enhancing the socio-economic development and improving the well-being of the people in the Mekong sub-region, as well as strengthening the long-lasting cooperation among the five Mekong countries.
4. We reiterated our aspiration and strong commitment, based on the spirit of good neighbourliness and traditional friendship to achieve peace, stability, and prosperity in the region. We will continue to work together through enhanced solidarity, mutual interest and understanding, and active cooperation to fully harness our enormous economic potentials so as to promote sustainable development and inclusive growth in our region.

5. We highly appreciated the positive momentum generated by the 8th ACMECS Summit in Bangkok in 2018, with the endorsement of two important outcome documents, namely: the Bangkok Declaration and the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) under the vision of “Building ACMECS CONNECT by 2023”. This vision has been designed to chart the course of actions to realize a more connected, smart, sustainable and resilient ACMECS community capable of adapting to emerging challenges posed by slow recovery of the global economy, growing trend of trade protectionism and anti-globalization. We also recognized ACMECS has become an important mechanism in addressing a number of transnational and cross-cutting issues and boosting resilience and responsiveness to ensure that the region is on the right path for sustainable and inclusive development.

6. We reiterated our concern about the severe challenges posed by non-traditional security issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, natural disasters, floods, droughts, saltwater intrusion, cross border infectious diseases and transnational crimes and their impacts on the livelihood of our people as well as on the socio-economic development of our respective countries. We acknowledged that the severe droughts, especially from 2019 and 2020, stemming mainly from other negative impacts and climate change had caused the water levels in the Mekong River to drop to new record lows, disrupting the subregion’s food supply, ecosystem, agriculture and aquaculture. We reaffirmed our shared commitment to achieve the goals in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to fully implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To this end, we agreed to strengthen cooperation in environmental conservation and protection, smart agriculture development and sustainable management of water resource of Mekong river to ensure the subregion’s food, water, energy security and address the impacts of climate change.

7. We noted the significant human health threat posed by newly emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, in particular the global outbreak pandemic of the respiratory illness caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has posed unprecedented and severe challenges to the wellbeing, livelihood and safety of our peoples and created enormous economic and social disruptions in our respective countries and across the globe. We expressed our profound condolences and solidarity with the families and societies whose people have lost their lives to the disease, those who are battling for their survival, and those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by this crisis. We commended the ongoing national efforts in the ACMECS member countries to mitigate and control the spread of COVID-19, and agreed to strengthen cooperation within ASEAN-led mechanisms, with external partners and international organizations, especially with the World

Health Organization (WHO) in the global response to contain, mitigate and defeat the COVID-19 pandemic, and other emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. We stressed the importance of information, experience and data sharing, awareness raising and advocacy programs, joint research and development, regular dialogues to exchange ideas and solutions, exchange of technologies in testing, containing and treatment of infectious diseases and vaccines production. We agreed to intensify our efforts to ensure that vaccines will become public goods and that medical services will be available, accessible and affordable for all and protect the people's health and safety as well as safeguarding the socio-economic development of the ACMECS countries.

8. We agreed to strengthen our post-pandemic cooperation focusing on mitigating the socio-economic impacts, addressing possible macroeconomic and financial challenges including refraining from imposing new and unnecessary barriers to cross-border trade and investment, sharing of experience and best practices, human resource development, movement of people, goods, and service, joint research and development of medicines and vaccines, further promoting multidimensional connectivity, tourism, ensuring social safety net, and enhancing preparedness for future health emergencies in the ACMECS countries. We further encourage cooperation between ACMECS Development Partners and relevant International Agencies to support our post-pandemic economic and social recovery, such as promoting digital economy and e-commerce connectivity, accessing to online market for MSMEs, transport facilitations, and mitigate supply-chain disruptions, as well as strengthening our resilience and response capacity to combat emerging diseases and public health emergency. In this regard, we welcome Thailand's initiative to add "Safe and Secured ACMECS" as another pillar of cooperation in the ACMECS Master Plan with an aim to build a more resilient, relevant and sustainable cooperation framework to deal with the unprecedented challenges of our time.

9. We welcomed the successful convening of the 4th ACMECS Tourism Ministers' Meeting in Chiang Rai, Thailand, on 13 June 2019, and commended on the progress made in promoting "Five Countries, One Destination", which aims to generate sustainable social and economic benefits for all ACMECS member countries. In this regard, we took note with satisfaction of the implementation of the Plan of Action on ACMECS Tourism Cooperation (2019-2023), which includes the tourism promotion and marketing, product linkages, information exchange, human resource development, tourism safety, smart tourism and private sector involvement. Acknowledging the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on ACMECS tourism sector, especially workers and businesses, we recommended

ACMECS Tourism Ministers to develop and implement joint projects for post COVID-19 recovery in tourism.

10. We noted the strong institutional efforts to implement the outcomes of the 8th ACMECS Summit Declaration and the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023), in particular the holding of several meetings of the ACMECS Senior Officials, ACMECS Senior Finance Officials' (SFO), and the 1st ACMECS Coordinating Committees' (ACC) Meeting, hosted by Cambodia and Thailand. We were encouraged by the progress made in the formulation of a number of strategic policy documents, specifically the Concept Paper on Development Partners and the Terms of Reference (TOR) on Engagement with 1st Batch of Development Partners, TOR of the ACMECS Development Fund (ACMDF), Concept Paper on the Working Mechanism for Coordinating Committees of Three Goals/Pillars under the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) and the List of Prioritized Projects. We encouraged SOM Leaders to further conduct study to enhance efficiency in our coordination efforts, including assessment of the feasibility and effectiveness of various measures such as virtual coordination hubs' network, e-meeting, virtual team communication, and Thailand's proposal for Secretariat set-up etc. with a view to provide effective implementation of ACMECS projects and activities in accordance with the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) and for greater coordination efficiency with the Development Partners. We also emphasized the need to maintain a lean, flexible and streamlined working/organizational structure of ACMECS to ensure the efficiency.

11. We reiterated our commitment and political will as stated in the Bangkok Declaration 2018 to establish ACMDF. The funding source of which shall come from the contributions of ACMECS member countries and Development Partners on a voluntary basis. Also welcomed contributions from International Organizations (IOs) and International Financial Institutions and other sources as deemed appropriate. We further welcomed Thailand's announcement to reimburse an appropriate first contribution at the earliest. We looked forward to the operationalization of ACMDF as well as other financing mechanisms to support the implementation of ACMECS projects under the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023) that can deliver tangible benefits for our peoples. The Terms of Reference of the ACMECS Development Fund is attached herewith as Annex 1.

12. We welcomed the strong interest of DPs in contributing to the ACMECS development agenda and warmly congratulated the first batch of ACMECS DPs, namely; Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, and the United States, for their engagement made at the ACMECS Inaugural Senior Officials' Meeting

with DPs on 29 July 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand. This partnership aims to foster the integration and prosperity of the ACMECS community through the implementation of projects and cooperation activities aiming at achieving three goals or pillars of cooperation in the ACMECS Master Plan (the 3S), namely Seamless Connectivity, Synchronized ACMECS Economies, and Smart and Sustainable ACMECS. In this regard, we took note of Japan's proposal to host the ACMECS Special Summit, which will be held back to back with the 13th Mekong-Japan Summit in Autumn 2021. We further agreed that the official Summit should be held in Member Countries as per our past practices. We also noted the intention of Israel and New Zealand to become the second batch of ACMECS DPs and will carry on consultation with potential and prospective Development Partners based on mutual interest, as well as on regional balance and diversification.

13. We endeavored to promote synergy and close coordination between ACMECS and relevant regional and sub-regional cooperation frameworks, including ASEAN, Cambodia-Lao PDR-Myanmar-Viet Nam, Cambodia-Lao PDR-Viet Nam, Friends of the Mekong, Mekong-US Partnership, Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, Mekong-Japan Cooperation, Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperation, Mekong-Lancang Cooperation, Greater Mekong Sub-region and the Mekong River Commission, to improve resource mobilization and avoid possible overlapping of activities.

14. We highly appreciated and endorsed Cambodia's proposed Concept Paper on the Working Mechanism for Coordinating Committees of Three Goals/Pillars under the ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023), which provides a clear guideline, well-coordinated meeting model, scope of work, line of report and communication of the Committees. We looked forward to the effective operation of the ACMECS Coordinating Committees to materialize the intended goals and objectives of the Master Plan. The Concept Paper is attached herewith as Annex 2.

15. We noted the list of Prioritized Projects, and looked forward to their early implementation for the benefits of all member countries. We tasked ACMECS Coordinating Committees, in close coordination with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of ACMECS member countries, to supervise and provide advocacy to line agencies with a view to regularly report the progress of the project formulation and implementation to the ACMECS SOM. We strongly encouraged DPs to provide informational, technical and financial support to accelerate the implementation of key priority projects, which are aligned with the set ACMECS Master Plan (2019-2023). The list of Prioritized Projects as Annex 3 to the Phnom Penh Declaration is a living document whereby ACMECS member countries can make amendment and submit their projects as appropriate to be reported to the annual SOM.

16. We reaffirmed the need to strengthen cooperation on cross-border trade, investment and industry among the ACMECS members given that the global and regional value chains are driven by technological capability, which requires economic restructuring in some ACMECS countries, including refocusing on more capital-intensive and digital economy. We recognized that a skilled workforce is an important foundation of sustainable economic growth and social advancement. We will continue our cooperation to enhance complementarities of human resources and skills development by embracing science, technology and innovation in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

17. We stressed on the significant role of public-private-partnership, which has played as an increasingly important function in driving economic growth and improving business climate; especially, in providing practical solutions to infrastructure development, logistic system enhancement, and the promotion of special economic zones. We also emphasized the need for promoting digital connectivity, trade, investment, travel and tourism as well as human resources development and capacity building in business sector, including MSMEs, Start-up Business and Innovation Centers in order to further narrow the development gap, increase competitiveness, bridge digital divide and accelerate better connectivity between ACMECS countries. We encouraged the private sectors to take part in the implementation of the ACMECS priority projects.

18. We welcomed the offer of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to host the 10th ACMECS Summit. The specific date and venue will be coordinated through diplomatic channel.

19. We expressed our appreciation to the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia for the excellent arrangements of the 9th ACMECS Summit via video conference.

Adopted on 9th December 2020.
