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## **Master Plan of Action to Implement the Lower Mekong Initiative** **2016-2020**

### **IA. Introduction**

The new Master Plan of Action to Implement the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) (hereinafter known as the “PoA”) is amended and intends to implement the goal of equitable, sustainable, and inclusive growth; narrow the development gap within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); and implement the specific objectives outlined by the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, and the Secretary of State of the United States at the 11<sup>th</sup> LMI Ministerial Meeting held in Singapore in August, 2018. The LMI seeks to meet regional development challenges by implementing capacity building programs with the active involvement and close cooperation of LMI governments. This updated version of the/version is the second, amended PoA for the LMI in line with the restructuring of LMI. The first covered the years 2011-2015.

**IB. Goal:** To deliver equitable, sustainable, and inclusive economic growth among the five Mekong partner countries by promoting connectivity and collaboratively addressing regional trans-boundary policy and development challenges. To strengthen U.S.-Mekong cooperation, friendship, and partnership among members.

### **IC. Objectives:**

These objectives will be met in each of the LMI’s work-streams through technical assistance, educational exchanges, private sector partnerships, third country trainings, and other programs.

1. The LMI will promote sustainable growth through implementing regional capacity-building activities, fostering regional policy dialogues, and exchanging expertise and best practices.
2. The LMI will strengthen regional connectivity by building connections among institutions, the public and private sectors, and people within the Mekong Region and with the United States.
3. Members and partners will identify and implement solutions for key regional challenges, focusing on (1) the Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus, and (2) Human Development and Connectivity. Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, while residing under the Human Development and Connectivity Pillar, will remain a cross-cutting theme and will be integrated in all activities under both Pillars.



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## **IIA. Structure of the LMI**

The LMI engages all six member countries to collaboratively identify solutions for key trans-boundary policy and development challenges by combining regional expertise and knowledge with lessons learned from the United States' policy and development history. Capacity building programs that seek to meet regional challenges do so through technical assistance, training, educational exchanges, private sector partnerships, engagement with universities and civil society, and other programs under the two "pillars" of 1) the Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus and 2) Human Development and Connectivity. These two pillars highlight regional objectives for poverty reduction and socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth on the basis of human resource development and capacity building. Connectivity, private sector engagement, and gender equality and women's empowerment should be integrated into all programs and activities.

## **IIB. Official Meetings**

LMI Members meet annually at the technical planning meetings, Senior Officials' Meetings, and Foreign Ministers' Meeting. LMI Policy Dialogues will comprise broad delegations including line ministry officials who can engage more deeply on selected themes.

## **IIB. The Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus Pillar**

1. The Food and Agriculture Organization predicts that by 2050 we will need 70 percent more food to feed the world's population. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development projects that by 2050 we will experience 50 percent more demand for water globally. The Asian Development Bank projects that energy demand in Asia will double between now and 2030. To meet these needs, we will have to identify new opportunities to increase our production potential, improve distribution, and capitalize on the synergies among water, food, energy, and the environment to achieve greater efficiencies and returns. At the same time, we will need to reduce the new risks emerging from the growing interdependencies among water, energy, food, and the environment.
2. Overcoming these challenges requires a longer-term, multi-sector perspective that can lead to new opportunities for growth and a reduction of risks and vulnerabilities. The management of water, energy, food, and environment issues often exists in separate silos and there is no process to support integrated planning and development. With greater investment in data and analytic capability, we envision that LMI partner countries will be able to make sound science-based policy decisions. Addressing the nexus is a key means of increasing the sustainability, resiliency, and security of LMI partner countries.
3. The Pillar will work in three areas to achieve the overarching goal of better integrated planning and development:
  - a. **Governance:** Promote institutional reforms to incentivize integrated planning and development, "buy-down" the risk of innovation, eliminate perverse incentives



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- (e.g., energy or water pricing policies that encourage water/energy wastage), improve transparency, strengthen data collection and dissemination, establish safeguards, strengthen local communities, and equitably distribute costs and benefits.
- b. **Technology:** Identify opportunities for the use and facilitation of transfer of new technologies that can improve efficiencies, reduce losses, and mitigate future risks. Examples include water purification and reuse, negative impacts to fisheries ecosystem, waste-to-energy systems, advanced irrigation systems, waterless cooling for power plants, and low-head hydropower.
  - c. **Finance:** Explore innovative financial tools that support “early adopters” of technology, improve infrastructure efficiency and sustainability, encourage conjunctive use of physical and natural systems, and diversify the risks inherent in any new approach. This could include pooled or revolving funds to support or guarantee new technologies and approaches across the nexus.
4. As highlighted in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint 2025, the AEC is envisioned to “Promote the principles of good governance, transparency, and responsive regulatory regimes through active engagement with the private sector, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders of ASEAN; and Create a more dynamic and resilient ASEAN, capable of responding and adjusting to emerging challenges through robust national and regional mechanisms that address food and energy security issues, natural disasters, economic shocks, and other emerging trade-related issues as well as global mega trends.”
  5. The LMI Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus Pillar seeks to reduce poverty while narrowing the development gap in the sub-region and within each LMI member state. The Nexus supports LMI partner countries to access advanced and green technologies in respective sectors to address water, energy, food, and environmental challenges. The Nexus also supports LMI partner countries in achieving their national and regional objectives for equitable, sustainable, and inclusive economic development and regional economic integration. It seeks to do so in alignment with the AEC Blueprint 2025.
  6. Renewable Energy (RE) development can be considered as one source to reduce carbon emissions and fulfill the needs of escalating energy demand within the region. It is vital to promote capacity building programmes for Renewable Energy among LMI partner countries. Collaborative research using emerging renewable energy technologies solar, biomass, small-scale hydro-power, and wind energy among LMI partner countries should be strengthened. Research institutions, universities and industries should collaborate for small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development.
  7. The Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus Pillar integrates the work-streams of Agriculture and Food Security, Energy Security, and Environment and



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Water; and the cross-cutting theme of the Nexus of Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment.

### **IIC. Human Development and Connectivity Pillar**

1. Developing human capital in LMI partner countries is an essential component in narrowing the development gap. In accordance with the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025, the LMI strives to support “a community that engages and benefits the people, and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic.”
2. The LMI Human Development and Connectivity Pillar seeks to improve the quality of higher education instruction and research methodology, as well as the use of technology, to better prepare youth to join the work force.
3. Further, in support of the East Asia Summit Manila Plan of Action, the Pillar assists LMI partner countries in implementing the One Health Approach (human-animal-ecosystem health joint risk management) to strengthen prevention, detection, and response capacities for disease outbreaks, including the risks posed by antimicrobial resistance and by zoonotic disease.
4. Reinforcing the efforts of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Women, the ASEAN Committee on Women, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, and other ASEAN and APEC fora, the LMI also seeks to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment and child labour elimination in LMI programming.
5. The LMI will explore opportunities to work with the Government of Singapore through the Third Country Training Program to train government officials from ASEAN countries and Timor Leste. Courses are designed to exchange best practices and reflect the shared priorities of Connectivity, Sustainable Development, and Regional Resilience. (More detail on this program in Appendix 1.)
6. Exchange/training programs for young diplomats involved in LMI will be promoted as they are key coordinators within the LMI mechanism such as the improvement of English Skills Program for LMI official, IELTS. The training program in FLM (countries) should be considered.
7. The Human Development and Connectivity pillar includes the work-streams of Education, Health, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, and the Third Country Training Program.

### **III. Plan of Action**

Activities in all areas will be planned and implemented with full consideration of promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, regional connectivity, and private sector engagement,



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thereby contributing to the comprehensive integration of cross-cutting issues into regional programs under the two pillars.

**A. Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus Pillar**

The LMI Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus Pillar seeks to enhance LMI partner countries' capacity in promoting sustainable development while reducing poverty and narrowing the development gap through engagements in the following sectors: Agriculture and Food Security, Energy Security, Environment and Water; and the Nexus of Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment.

1. The Pillar's goal is to achieve better integrated planning and development among LMI members.
2. The Pillar builds technical capacity of line ministry officials in LMI partner countries.
3. The Pillar promotes inter-agency and multilateral engagement and consultation.
4. Agriculture and Food Security

*LMI members seek to improve agricultural sector growth and food security throughout the Mekong sub-region in an inclusive and sustainable manner, building on and using best practices. Activities in all areas will be planned and implemented with full consideration of gender equality and women's empowerment, climate change, child labour elimination and other environmental and health concerns. The overlap of issues among the two LMI Pillars will contribute to synergistic collaborations among the various Ministries within each country, and will lead to fair policies.*

**a. Specific Objective: Promote collaboration in agricultural research, institutional capacity building, human resources development, trade, and investment.**

**Project:** Feed the Future

(1) Climate Change

- i. Build institutional and human capacity to share, utilize, and leverage existing national and international information, databases, and fora on such issues as the impact of climate change on regional food security; and technologies available to help address the needs of farmers, vulnerable populations, and women.
- ii. Promote the implementation of regional multi-sectoral framework for climate change related to agriculture and forestry towards food and nutrition security and achievement of SDGs

(2) Innovative Technologies



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- i. Coordinate information on regional field trials for improved crop variety development and selection and the demonstration of new and green technologies and/or management practices used in production and processing, that also fulfill the requirements on food safety & nutrition.
- ii. Conduct collaborative research and assessments on reducing the environmental impact of agricultural production, and pre- and post-harvest losses.

### (3) Aquaculture and Fisheries

- i. Enhance coordination, communication and capacity building on aquaculture, fisheries, and other aquatic resources to improve sustainable production practices, smallholder farmers, fishers and communities in the Lower Mekong sub-region. Enhanced coordination and communication should include smallholder farmers. Programs should enable farmers and fisher folk to meet standards increasingly demanded by buyers. These efforts will be made in collaboration with ASEAN, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Fish Center (WFC), the Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), the Network of Aquaculture Centers in Asia-Pacific (NACA), INFOFISH, Mekong River Commission (MRC), and national and regional non-government organizations (NGOs).

### (4) Agricultural Trade

- i. To encourage trade of agricultural inputs and products to address food security needs, this work-stream will provide assistance for implementing existing trade agreements and reducing regional trade barriers that:
  1. Impede private sector investment and market access, and
  2. Impede farmers' access to vital facilities of agricultural production.
- ii. To support activities related to NTB elimination in the areas of crops, livestock and fisheries.

### (5) Public-private Cooperation

- i. Promote cooperation with the private sector on agri-business development and investment; and
- ii. Promote awareness, capacity building, and use of innovative approaches and technology transfer;



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- iii. Promote and provide capacity building to MSMEs on the international standards related to agriculture products;
- iv. Promote agricultural investment, particularly in infrastructure and technology; and
- v. Support the implementation of the ASEAN Public-Private Partnership Regional Framework for Technology Development in the sectors of food and agriculture.

## 5. Energy Security

*Demand for energy in LMI partner countries is increasing at a rate of approximately 10 percent per year. LMI members seek to increase energy security and energy access, achieve economic growth, and implement safeguards to protect water, food, and the environment. To do this, LMI member countries agreed to increase communication and to work toward further regional grid interconnection.*

**Project:** Power Sector Program LMI Regional Assistance

### **Specific Objectives:**

- a. Removing barriers to sustainable energy development and trade in the LMI sub-region.
- b. Ensuring economic and energy security for LMI member states.
- c. Promoting universal access to affordable and reliable energy.
- d. Ensuring the energy development projects on the Mekong River take into consideration social, water, irrigation, and environmental impacts.

**Project:** DOE Foundations for Strategic Lower Mekong Hydropower and Water Resources Management (2018-2019)

- e. Strengthening cooperation, exchange of information and dialogue in the region on energy issues.
- f. Promoting energy efficiency and development of alternative energy sources.
- g. Promoting electricity interconnection among LMI partner countries, and with ASEAN.

**Project:** ENR Air Conditioning Efficiency Program (2016-2018)



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**Project:** ENR Power Sector Program for Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam

- h. Leveraging private sector and NGO expertise to help achieve these objectives.
- i. Promoting an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Program in LMI member states.
- j. Improving targets of Energy Security to conduct the principal requirements for Oil Stockpiling in LMI member states

6. Environment and Water

To meet our key objectives of improving water security, promoting disaster risk reduction, and protecting the environment, forest, and biodiversity, this work-stream leverages the following approaches across each objective:

- a. Strengthening regional cooperation, dialogue, and exchange of information across disciplines and countries;
- b. Facilitating the introduction of new innovative technologies, best practices, and knowledge to more effectively manage current needs and future demands for environmental, natural, and water resources; and
- c. Incorporating good governance tools, which will manage and promote the value of protected areas in providing services and sustainable financial resources in contributing to local livelihoods into national strategies.
- d. **Goal:** Promoting dialogue on sustainable environmental management, strengthening capacity to forecast floods and drought on a regional scale, and improving capacity to manage transboundary water resources among LMI partner countries.

**Specific Objectives:**

**(1) Improve water security.** Support national and regional capacity to manage increasingly variable transboundary water resources in a sustainable way while also preparing to meet future needs. Ensure access to water suitable for consumption, energy, agriculture, and other needs.

- i. Improve sustainable access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene in underserved areas to support economic development and poverty alleviation.
- ii. Build common transparent, science-based institutions for the development of transboundary water resources.
- iii. Build capacity for the Mekong countries in:
  - 1. Utilizing water security management tools; and





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2. Utilizing biodiversity and environmental management tools, especially for impacts of basin development activities on natural and social systems.
- iv. Increase public awareness of the impact of transboundary water resources use and the need for an integrated approach on livelihoods and overall well-being of riparian communities.

**Project List:**

1. **IUCN** Mekong Nexus Dialogue (2015-2017)
2. **USACE**: Mississippi & Mekong River Commission Sister River Partnership Exchange in the United States (Jan 2017)
3. **USACE**: SIM Lao PDR Dam Safety III – Inspection and Monitoring (Jan 2017)
4. **USACE**: Mississippi & Mekong River Commission Sister River Partnership Exchange in the Mekong Basin (Apr 2017)
5. **SIM**: Sustainable Fisheries Development in the Context of Climate Change, 9 seminars/trainings (Apr-Sep, 2017, Viet Nam)
6. **Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership (SIP)**: Training on Stakeholder Engagement in Sustainable Infrastructure Development Planning in the Lower Mekong Basin (May 22-24, 2017)
7. **USACE**: Myanmar LMI Best Practices in Engineering Phase I, II, & III (Apr, Jul, Sep 2017)
8. **USACE**: Water Resource Planner Embed to USEMB & Lao PDR MEM (Jun-Jul 2017)
9. **USACE**: Laos Public Participation & Conflict Transformation II & III (Oct 2016 & Jun 2017)
10. **USACE**: MRC Joint Committee Strategic Retreat and Collaboration Workshop (Jul 2017)
11. **SIM**: Improving Dam Safety Assessment Capacity at Irrigation Reservoirs (September 5-14, 2017, Viet Nam)
12. **SIP**: Inclusive Platform for Water and Flows Data Sharing (October 27, 2017, Yangon, Myanmar)
13. **SIP**: Water Quality Impact Mitigation and Strengthening Hydropower Cascade Dam Management for Nam Ngum River Basin (January 2018, Lao PDR)
14. **SIP**: Improving Data for Water Resources Management Meeting II (May 2, 2018, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar)
15. **USACE-Korea** Water Resources Corporation (K-Water) Hydraulics & Hydrology And Shared Vision Planning Workshop – Daechong, ROK (Sep 2018)



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16. **SIP:** Expert Training Course- Cumulative Impact Assessment on Lower Mekong Regional Water Infrastructure Planning and Development (September 2018, TBC)
  17. **SIP:** Mekong Research Symposium - (Sep 6-7 2018, HCMC)
  18. **SIP:** Engagement of Thai Banking Industry for Sustainable Finance Policy Development (Nov 2018, Thailand)
  19. **USACE:** Laos PDR MEM Water Reservoir Modeling (Pending funding and date TBD in 2018)
  20. **USACE:** Myanmar LMI Best Practices in Engineering Phase IV & V (Pending funding and date TBD in 2018)
  21. **USACE:** Collaborative Planning & Training (Pending funding and dates TBD in 2018)
  22. **USACE:** Water Resource Planner / Consultation Embed to MRC (Pending funding, Scope Development, and dates TBD in 2018)
  23. **Servir** Lower Mekong (2014-2017)
  24. **SIP:** Technical Assistance Support to Lao-World Bank IWRM Capacity Building Program (Ongoing 2018, TBC)
  25. **SIM:** Lao PDR: River and Reservoir Sediment Modelling Project 2
- (2) Promote disaster risk reduction.** Improve capacity in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Practices so that countries are better prepared for, and able to respond to, natural disasters.
- i. Build preparedness through strengthened monitoring and early warning systems, including the development of better predictive tools and services.
  - ii. Build capacity to respond to potential disasters through training and exercise.
- Project: USACE:** Lao PDR Public Participation & Conflict Transformation III (Jun 2017)
- Project: USACE:** USARPAC LMI Disaster Response Exercise & Exchange Myanmar (Dec 2017)
- Project: USACE:** USARPAC LMI Disaster Response Exercise & Exchange – Thailand (Dec 2018)
- (3) Protect environment, forest, and biodiversity.** Promote sound and sustainable natural resource management by improving capacity to address transnational natural resource issues, with particular emphasis on biodiversity, forests, fisheries, and wetlands.
- i. Improve dialogue between scientists and policy makers and share best practices from social, environmental, and natural sciences.
  - ii. Build technical capacity and political awareness to address adaptation, mitigation, and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.



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- iii. Incorporate good governance tools and guidelines on Environment and natural resource protection for sustainable management into national strategies, such as impact assessments.

**Project: SIM:** Cambodia: Environmental Code Drafting Assistance (December, 2017)

**Project: TCTP:** Air, Water, Waste Management (July 2-6, 2018)

- (4) **Improve Flood Early Warning System.** To provide necessary information for flood disaster prevention, mitigation and development of socio-economic activities.
  - i. Install the automatic water level observing system and automatic weather observing system in Lower Mekong region.
  - ii. Improve for flood forecasting and early warning system.
  - iii. Build the human resources development for flood forecasting and impacts. (Myanmar)
- (5) **Mekong Water Data Initiative** (the Action Plan for the Initiative is included in Appendix 3)

## **B. Human Development and Connectivity Pillar**

Developing human capital in the Lower Mekong countries is essential for narrowing the development gap. In accordance with the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint 2025, the LMI strives to support “a community that engages and benefits the people, and is inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and dynamic.” The Human Development and Connectivity Pillar includes the work-streams of Education, Health, Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, and the Third Country Training Program.

1. The (HD&C) Pillar will work to maximize human potential and connectivity in service of narrowing the development gap in the sub-region and enhancing regional integration.
2. The Pillar builds technical capacity of line ministry officials in LMI partner countries.
3. The Pillar promotes inter-agency and multilateral engagement and consultation.
4. Education

*To narrow economic and social disparities, promote economic development, and improve social wellbeing, LMI partner countries must foster regional education collaboration and improve access to quality education. The Education work-stream focuses on sharing best practices among LMI members through a variety of education and people-to-people projects. The Education work-stream includes a focus on enhanced instructor training and higher-level research methodologies. The LMI supports English language and communication skills development for LMI member citizens to better collaborate on joint projects and strengthen ASEAN relationships. The LMI promotes sustainable growth through capacity-building activities, establishing platforms for dialogue, and facilitating opportunities for exchange of expertise and best practices.*



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### **Specific Objectives**

#### **a. Strengthen institutional links for cooperation among LMI partner countries**

- (1) Promote cooperation in higher education, including among institutions, professors, researchers, and students with the goal of facilitating international best practices in areas of regional interest. Increase research and publishing capabilities in LMI partner countries.
- (2) Raise awareness of good practices and training sessions through workshops and conferences in areas of mutual interest, encouraging participation of other regional and international partners.
- (3) Support English language development as a vehicle for strengthening institutional linkages among countries.

**Project:** Professional Communications Skills for Leaders Project (2012-2017)

#### **b. Prepare Youth, Young Professionals, and Women for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workplace:**

- (1) Improve the adaptability of academic, technical, and vocational skills training in LMI partner countries to prepare youth, young professionals, and women for the 21st century workplace.
- (2) Increase opportunities for collaboration among youth in LMI partner countries by connecting students and young people via academic institutions and exchanges as well as opportunities for training and internships in the public and the private sectors.
- (3) Strengthen academic-industry linkages, including ties to U.S. companies, to develop a pipeline of skilled labor and a workforce that uses the latest technologies.
- (4) Foster and promote scientific collaboration within the region, and
- (5) Promote knowledge sharing on science and technology best practices and research ideas.

**Project: COMET:** Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (2014-2019)

**Project:** Young Scientist Research Program (2018-2020)

## 5. Health



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*LMI members agree on the importance of Health activities to improve human health and thereby narrow the poverty and development gaps. Economic growth is dependent on health. This PoA more clearly defines specific health goals and areas of cooperation under the LMI, and is based on the outcomes of Regional Working Group Eleven in Nay Pyi Taw in May 2018. Cross-border issues are a particular concern and should be examined under each of the Health work-stream areas of activity.*

### **Specific Objectives**

**a. Promote the One-Health Approach. One-Health recognizes the important linkages among human health, animal health, and ecosystem health, and underscores the necessity for stronger cooperation among sectors for effective risk management.**

- (1) Enhance connectivity among sectors and ministries related to antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic diseases under the One Health approach.

**Project:** OH-Smart Regional Tool Development (2017-2018)

**Project: TCTP:** Disease Outbreak and Response (October 23-27, 2017 in Singapore)

**Project:** Vector Surveillance and Control Info Sharing Program (September, 2018)

- (2) Work with educational institutions to build capacity and address gaps in operationalizing One Health.
- (3) Pay special attention to regional movement of pandemic threats.
- (4) Pursue gender equity within One-Health programs.

**b. Continue implementation of International Health Regulations**

- (1) Facilitate regional collaboration in implementing the International Health Regulations to support robust preparedness for and response to public health emergencies.
- (2) Build capacity to address chemical, radiological, nuclear [TH] and biological threats.

**Project: TCTP:** Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Emergency Detection and Response (November TBD)

**b. Combat Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Resistance gained by microorganisms (including bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites) threatens health security and jeopardizes modern medical advances.**



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- (1) Promote the development of national antimicrobial resistance action plans and operational networks that can implement these plans.

**Project: TCTP: Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) (October 1-5, 2018)**

6. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

*Gender integration is critical to achieving the overall objectives of the LMI. The LMI seeks to leverage partner country expertise in ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment in government structures and fostering inclusive development by engaging stakeholders across all sectors. The LMI will achieve the specific objectives outlined below through the implementation of high-level dialogues and technical exchanges to develop shared responses to gender equality and women's empowerment challenges in the Lower Mekong sub-region; innovative programs to ensure women and girls contribute to and benefit from economic growth and sustainable development; and gender-balanced participation in LMI meetings, trainings, and programs.*

**Specific Objectives**

**a. Integrate a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in all LMI programs:**

- (1) Analyze how the different roles and status of women and men within the community, political sphere, workplace, and household affect the achievement of priorities;
- (2) Identify challenges and solutions to addressing gender inequality under each pillar and program;
- (3) Ensure programs are designed to benefit both men and women;
- (4) Identify and integrate gender sensitive and sex-disaggregated indicators in monitoring and evaluation of all programs; and
- (5) Ensure better mobilization of gender responsive budgeting within all LMI activities, projects, and programs.

**b. Promote a focus on women's empowerment in LMI implementation and approaches:**

- (1) Ensure gender equitable representation in all LMI delegations, trainings, and programs, as appropriate;
- (2) Adapt successful practices and mechanisms on women's participation from ASEAN, APEC, and other multilateral fora;



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- (3) Leverage new and existing partnerships, including private sector partnerships, to promote women's and girls' empowerment; and
- (4) Highlight and share successful policies and programs from member countries, including in the areas of women's economic empowerment, legal protection for women, violence against women, and women's leadership.

**Project:** Lao PDR Women's Entrepreneurial Center (2017)

#### 4. Connectivity

*Connectivity represents the intersection of economic development, human capital, information and communication technologies, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, and the cross-border movement of goods, services and people. Designed to reflect the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 and to support ASEAN economic integration, the Connectivity work-stream develops strategies and tools to connect all LMI member states.*

- a. **Goal: Strengthen soft infrastructure, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity, creating pathways for economic and social development nationally and regionally, including across borders.**

#### **Specific Objectives**

##### **b. Promote socially and environmentally sustainable infrastructure development**

- (1) Assist infrastructure planners to increase sustainability of infrastructure by incorporating environmentally and socially sound safeguards (including impact assessments) in the design, planning, construction, and evaluation stages that address climate change, natural disaster relief management, potential displacement of persons, and the needs of persons, including social welfare, affected by climate change or disasters.

**Project: USACE:** SIM Lao PDR Dam Safety III – Inspection and Monitoring (Jan 2017)

**Project: USACE:** Myanmar LMI Best Practices in Engineering Phase I, II, & III (Apr, Jul, Sep 2017)

- (2) Provide regular opportunities for LMI governments, across all relevant ministries, to engage in collaborative regional infrastructure planning. Provide U.S. expertise where appropriate.

##### **c. Facilitate an enabling business environment**



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- (1) Promote implementation of legislation that is transparent and creates investor and business confidence, fosters small- and medium-sized business development, furthers rural development, and encourages entrepreneurial innovation.
- (2) Leverage U.S. private sector expertise and resources to build capacity and connect regional governments and businesses to U.S. corporate supply chains.
- (3) Engage the private sector in developing efficient and practical solutions to logistical and supply-chain bottlenecks.
- (4) Enhance the reach of technology and promote investment in green technology to prepare LMI member economies to adapt to a changing economy.

**Program:** Public-Private Partnership Training (2018-2019)

**d. Increase cross-border cooperation**

- (1) Leverage existing tools to pinpoint and assess infrastructure gaps that affect the movement of goods, services, and people across borders.
- (2) Address gaps in border management via technical assistance from appropriate U.S. government and private sector institutions.
- (3) Promote utilization of information and communications technology (ICT), including for the ASEAN Single Window, to facilitate trade.





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## Appendix 1

**A.1. Background** The LMI PoA builds upon strong cooperation among the six LMI members. LMI was developed in response to the collective policy challenges and opportunities shared by Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. LMI seeks to build capacity and human resources in these countries through mutual cooperation and the sharing of relevant human and technological expertise across the above-defined areas of engagement. The five LMI partner countries co-chair an LMI Pillar with the United States in rotation: Water, Energy, Food, and the Environment Nexus – [insert co-chair]; and Human Development and Connectivity – [insert co-chair].

**A.2.** This PoA is a non-binding arrangement to promote coordination and implement capacity building activities, with a focus on fostering partnership. Though focus areas listed herein have been recognized as of interest to the majority of LMI partner countries, any country may lead, participate in, or not participate in any given activity. This PoA has been crafted to complement the existing and ongoing activities being carried out by partner countries or associated regional institutions in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

## B. Friends of the Lower Mekong

This PoA also provides the scope of engagement for Friends of the Lower Mekong (FLM), focusing on donor policy dialogue and donor coordination efforts. FLM includes all LMI members as well as Australia, the EU, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank. The focus theme for the next few years of FLM will be advancing sustainability in the Lower Mekong region and collaboratively addressing challenges of the water, energy, food, and environment nexus. FLM members are invited to LMI Regional Working Group meetings to help avoid overlap and identify gaps in regional programs.

## C. Third Country Training Program

In support of the human development Human Development and Connectivity Pillar the United States, in partnership with Singapore, intends to offer training assistance to government officials of third countries from ASEAN countries and Timor Leste under the Third Country Training Program (TCTP). Courses are designed to share best practices for improving government planning and response to regional challenges and reflect the shared priorities of connectivity, sustainable development, and regional resilience. Course trainees are nominated by U.S. diplomats posted in the ASEAN countries and by members of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Courses are conducted in Singapore and are approximately three to five days long.

## D. Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Building on the development of the ASEAN Community, as well as the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity, LMI objectives are closely aligned with ASEAN-identified priorities. The LMI supported the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 and leverages



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U. S. expertise in fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and trade; cultivating technical and managerial expertise to promote infrastructure connectivity; and expanding educational access and opportunities. Connect Mekong, launched in 2012, established formal channels of communication between the LMI and ASEAN, fast-tracks LMI programs which contribute most effectively to ASEAN connectivity, and initiated new efforts to generate grass-roots entrepreneurship in the Mekong sub-region. The ASEAN Secretariat is welcome to participate in all LMI and FLM official calendar events (Regional Working Group meetings, Senior Officials Meetings, and Ministerial Meetings).

#### **E. Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025**

The Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 envisions connecting ASEAN through enhanced physical infrastructure development (physical connectivity), effective institutional arrangements (institutional connectivity), and empowered people (people-to-people connectivity). MPAC 2025 focuses on five strategic areas: (i) Sustainable Infrastructure; (ii) Digital Innovation; (iii) Seamless Logistics; (iv) Regulatory Excellence; and (v) People Mobility; with 15 initiatives under different strategic areas.

### **Appendix 2: List of LMI Signature Projects**

- A. Connect Mekong** – This program promotes physical, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity through the delivery of trainings, technical assistance, and best practice exchanges, leveraging U.S. experts from across many agencies and the private sector to foster trade, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Activities seek to narrow the development gap in ASEAN and promote the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015.
- B. Smart Infrastructure for the Mekong (SIM)** – This scientific technical assistance program supports environmentally sound, socially equitable infrastructure, clean energy, and land and water use.
- C. Mekong Water Data Initiative (MWDI)** – The MWDI builds the capacity of LMI members to generate, share, analyze, and apply hydrologic data to inform science-based decision-making and improve the management of the Mekong River, in close collaboration with the Mekong River Commission (MRC).
- D. Connecting the Mekong through Education and Training (COMET)** – This workforce development project assists universities and vocational centers to increase the number of skilled workers in ASEAN priority sectors through on-line education and in-person training. COMET includes strategic business partnerships, including Microsoft and Cisco Systems.
- E. Women’s Entrepreneurial Centers (WEC)** – WECs develop physical entrepreneurial community centers to provide access to mentorship, education, technology, and network resources that enable new businesses to start and established businesses to build capacity and generate momentum for measurable economic and societal change. WECs are



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designed to advance gender equality in entrepreneurship through a portfolio of programs, tools, and events.

**F. One Health Program** - promotes early detection of and response to diseases in animals before they become threats to human health, and enhances regional capacity for disease prevention, detection, and response across human and animal health, and the environment. One Health supports LMI members in preparedness for and response to antimicrobial resistance.

**G. Young Scientist Program** – trains the next generation of scientists and graduate students in LMI partner countries on state of the art research and publishing methodologies with a goal of increasing their capabilities to produce actionable research results for the benefit of the LMI sub-region and beyond.

### **Appendix 3: Joint Statement to Strengthen Water Data Management and Information Sharing in the Lower Mekong**



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## **JOINT STATEMENT TO STRENGTHEN WATER DATA MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SHARING IN THE LOWER MEKONG**

**3 August 2018**

1. The Ministers/Representatives of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam (hereafter referred to as the “Lower Mekong Countries”); the European Union, the Governments of Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, and the United States; and the World Bank (hereafter referred to as the “Development Partners”); and Mekong River Commission (MRC), collectively referred to as “the Participants,”
2. In the spirit of promoting continued cooperation to support inclusive and sustainable development among the Lower Mekong Countries;
3. *Recalling* the Siem Reap Declaration from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mekong River Commission Summit and the country statements to prioritize the strengthening of data and information management systems through joint efforts and partnerships;
4. *Recalling* the Ministerial Declaration from the 10th Meeting of the Lower Mekong Initiative to renew and strengthen efforts to provide sound, sufficient, and timely data for sustainably managing water-related resources and for reducing risks related to extreme events;
5. *Recognizing* the critical role of the MRC as a facilitator of data and information sharing and as a regional knowledge hub to promote cooperation on science-based decision making for development activities for the Mekong River Basin;
6. *Recognizing* that the Mekong’s environmental issues are transboundary by nature, and therefore require regional approaches to development, monitoring, and management of scientific data;
7. *Acknowledging* ongoing efforts to improve national and regional databases including progress towards the implementation of the MRC Procedures for Data and Information Exchange and Sharing (PDIES);
8. *Noting* that data capacity needs persist across countries and within national and regional institutions and that the demand for data products and services is outpacing abilities to generate, analyze, share, and apply data, especially as challenges related to development of significant projects in the Mekong’s mainstream, , increasing populations, urbanization, changing land use, and climate change continue to emerge;
9. *Noting* that, at the same time, the Lower Mekong Countries have tremendous capacity and are the primary collectors and managers of real-time data in the region;



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10. *Noting* also the critical need of these products and the analyses that derive from them to save lives and livelihoods, protect ecosystems, reduce costs, and increase opportunities for economic development at all levels; and
11. *Taking into account* and building off global and regional efforts to strengthen data availability and management including the World Water Data Initiative, and the Group of Earth Observation initiative, in accordance with the laws and regulations on the collection and transfer of data;
12. Do hereby endeavor to:
  - a. Strengthen the individual capacity of the Lower Mekong Countries to collect, analyze and manage water (quality and quantity; surface and ground), land, and weather data and information products for the purposes of reducing water-related risks, improving regional responses to environmental emergencies, and promoting sustainable economic development across the water, food, energy, and environment nexus.
  - b. Strengthen the capacity of the MRC to collect and analyze globally accessible datasets, remote sensing, and other real-time data to support flood, drought, and extreme event forecasting; basin-wide water resources; hydrological modelling; and impact analysis tools.
  - c. Strengthen the implementation of the PDIES and build the MRC's capacity to facilitate data access and data exchange.
  - d. When requested by data users, and with the permission of the data providers, seek to make data and data analysis/management tools more readily available.
  - e. Within Lower Mekong Countries and with the support of Development Partners, review existing data policies and national data management frameworks; increase investments in data collection (both *in-situ* and remote sensing) and data services and related Research and Innovation activities, including relevant socio-economic information; work to ensure key data functions are appropriately staffed and resourced; establish mechanisms for improving data access, data sharing, and data use across sector ministries; improve national capacity level on hydrological modelling and forecasting as well as integrated tools across the nexus of water, food, energy and the environment, including tools for impact analysis of development projects and strategic environmental assessments.
  - f. Promote common procedures and practices throughout the region for data collection, storage and analysis to support data sharing and integration of existing data management systems based on voluntary participation of countries and institutions.



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- g. Recommend new opportunities for public-private partnerships to expand data access, improve management of data and knowledge resources, and introduce advance technologies.
  - h. Promote the sharing of generated information, best practices, and lessons learned to related stakeholders at a level comfortable for participating countries and institutions.
  - i. Continue to coordinate Participants' efforts to implement this plan by leveraging support and resources through greater collaboration between various sub-national, national, and regional processes and programs, civil society organizations, and multilateral institutions.
  - j. Strengthen the capacity of the Lower Mekong Initiative Countries with the support of Development Partners to install real-time water level and rainfall observation stations and to upgrade the early warning system.
13. Participants may revise, amend, or modify any part of or all of this joint statement at any time by mutual written consent.
14. This joint statement does not constitute a fiscal or funds obligation document. The Participants understand that any activities contemplated under this joint statement are subject to the availability of funds and other resources. This joint statement is not legally binding and does not create any rights or obligations under international law or the domestic laws of the Participants.
15. All references in the above to 'data' are understood as referring to data other than personal data.

### **Representatives:**

1. H.E. Dr. Sok Siphana, Advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia
2. H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lao People's Democratic Republic
3. H.E. U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation, Republic of the Union of Myanmar
4. H.E. Don Pramudwinai, Foreign Minister, Kingdom of Thailand
5. H.E. Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State, United States of America
6. H.E. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
7. H.E. Julie Bishop, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Australia
8. H.E. Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Union



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9. Mr. Toshihide Ando, Deputy Director-General, Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan
10. H.E. Winston Peters, Minister of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand
11. H.E. Kang Kyung-wha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea
12. Jyoti Shukla, Director, World Bank Group
13. Dr. Pham Tuan Phan, Chief Executive Officer, Mekong River Commission