

Mekong – ROK Cooperation Program Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs

The **Mekong - ROK Cooperation** is a strategic initiative that fosters collaboration between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the five Mekong countries—Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Established as a mechanism to enhance regional integration and sustainable development, MKCF serves as an essential platform for addressing shared challenges and harnessing opportunities for economic and social progress.

Since its inception, the Mekong - ROK partnership has been guided by the principles of **mutual prosperity, inclusivity, and sustainable development**. It is rooted in the **Mekong-Han River Declaration**, which underscores the commitment of both the ROK and Mekong nations to fostering cooperation across various sectors, ensuring long-term resilience, and promoting peace and stability in the region.

The Plan of Action (POA) 2021-2025

To operationalize the goals set forth in the **Mekong-Han River Declaration**, the **Plan of Action (POA) 2021-2025 on Mekong – ROK Cooperation** was developed as a roadmap for implementing priority programs and projects. This POA provides a structured approach to regional collaboration by focusing on seven priority sectors essential for sustainable growth and stability in the Mekong region:

- ① **Culture and Tourism** – Promoting cultural exchanges, sustainable tourism development, and enhanced people-to-people connectivity.
- ② **Human Resources Development** – Strengthening education, vocational training, and capacity-building programs to develop a competitive workforce.
- ③ **Agriculture and Rural Development** – Enhancing food security, sustainable farming practices, and rural economic development.
- ④ **Infrastructure** – Improving transportation networks, digital infrastructure, and energy security to drive economic growth.
- ⑤ **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** – Advancing digital transformation, e-governance, and smart city initiatives.
- ⑥ **Environment** – Addressing climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management.
- ⑦ **Non-Traditional Security Challenges** – Enhancing regional security through collaboration on transnational crime, public health crises, and disaster resilience. Each of these priority

areas aligns with the shared vision of fostering inclusive and sustainable development across the Mekong subregion.

MKCF Funding and Support for Regional Projects

The **Mekong - ROK Cooperation Fund (MKCF)** translates the POA into action. The fund provides financial resources for **projects that align with the seven priority sectors**, ensuring tangible benefits for local communities and regional stakeholders. By supporting projects that **enhance economic integration, promote knowledge-sharing, and improve institutional capacity**, MKCF fosters long-term resilience and sustainable development.

1. Culture and Tourism

Enhancing Cultural Connectivity and Sustainable Tourism in the Mekong Region

Impact: The overarching goal of this initiative is to foster peace, prosperity, and people-centered cooperation through cultural exchange and sustainable tourism. The intended impact includes:

- **Cultural Diplomacy and Understanding:** Strengthening mutual awareness and appreciation among Mekong countries through enhanced cultural exchanges and cooperation.
- **Economic Growth and Tourism Revenue:** Boosting the tourism industry through sustainable development initiatives that generate economic benefits and employment opportunities.
- **Social Inclusiveness and Well-being:** Ensuring the protection and promotion of cultural heritage while fostering multiculturalism and inclusive community engagement.

Outcomes: To realize these long-term impacts, the program focuses on the following key outcomes:

① Enhanced People-Centered Cooperation and Inclusion

- Strengthening collaboration among Mekong countries in cultural and tourism development.
- Improving coordination for joint cultural and tourism initiatives.

② Cultural Exchange and Understanding

- Deepening mutual cultural awareness and appreciation through structured programs.
- Promoting respect for diverse cultural identities across the region.

③ Sustainable Tourism Development

- Encouraging preservation and restoration efforts for cultural sites.
- Expanding alternative tourism sectors, such as agritourism and culinary tourism, to promote local economic growth.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the program will implement the following concrete activities:

- ① **Joint Projects and Coordination**
 - Facilitating collaborative cultural and tourism projects.
 - Establishing effective coordination mechanisms for ongoing cooperation.
- ② **Commemorative Activities**
 - Organizing events to celebrate cultural heritage and shared regional history.
 - Developing special initiatives to highlight the rich cultural diversity of Mekong countries.
- ③ **Mutual Cultural Awareness and Understanding**
 - Expanding educational programs that promote cultural literacy.
 - Supporting tourism initiatives that foster people-to-people exchanges.
- ④ **Cultural Heritage Preservation and Restoration**
 - Undertaking joint efforts to restore and maintain cultural sites.
 - Promoting sustainable tourism models that ensure long-term heritage protection.
- ⑤ **Mekong Country Sports Cooperation**
 - Developing exchange programs for athletes to enhance cultural ties.
 - Organizing sports events to build regional solidarity.
- ⑥ **Support for Multiculturalism**
 - Implementing initiatives to support expatriate communities.
 - Encouraging policies that promote cultural inclusiveness in the region.

2. HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Strengthening Human Capital for Sustainable Development in the Mekong Region

Impact: The Human Resources Development (HRD) strategy aims to promote **peace, prosperity, and people-centered growth** through enhanced education, vocational training, and knowledge-sharing initiatives. The key intended impacts include:

- **Reduced Inequalities in Education:** Expanding access to quality education and training opportunities to reduce disparities and improve social mobility.
- **Economic Growth through Skilled Workforce Development:** Strengthening human capital to drive sustainable economic development and improve employability.
- **Social Inclusion and Cultural Understanding:** Empowering individuals with relevant skills while fostering intercultural dialogue and regional cooperation.

Outcomes: To achieve these long-term impacts, the HRD program is focused on the following key outcomes:

① **Enhanced Knowledge and Skills Development**

- Strengthening academic and research networks to foster knowledge exchange.
- Expanding access to vocational training, technical education, and capacitybuilding programs.

② **Improved Quality and Inclusivity in Education** ○ Increasing scholarship opportunities and e-learning programs for broader access.

- Promoting inclusive education policies that address gender and socioeconomic disparities.

③ **Workforce Readiness and Productivity** ○ Ensuring graduates and trainees acquire relevant, industry-aligned skills. ○ Enhancing collaboration between educational institutions and the private sector.

④ **Cross-Cultural Communication and Collaboration** ○ Promoting language education and cultural exchange programs.

- Strengthening cooperation among Mekong countries to improve knowledgesharing.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the HRD program will implement a range of initiatives, including:

- ① **Joint Academic and Educational Initiatives** ○ Establishing collaborative research projects and educational exchanges.
 - Organizing regional academic networking events and policy dialogues.
- ② **Capacity Building in Vocational and Technical Education** ○ Expanding technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs. ○ Strengthening partnerships between institutions and industries for practical skill-building.
- ③ **E-Learning and Digital Education Enhancement** ○ Improving access to online learning platforms and digital resources.
 - Enhancing training programs to develop digital literacy and ICT competencies.
- ④ **Scholarship and Training Opportunities** ○ Expanding merit-based scholarships and government-funded training programs.
 - Promoting leadership and skills development programs, such as the **Mekong Leadership Program**.
- ⑤ **Language and Cultural Exchange Programs**
 - Supporting language learning initiatives to enhance communication and mobility.
 - Encouraging people-to-people exchanges through joint cultural and educational activities.
- ⑥ **Collaboration Between Universities and Private Sector**
 - Encouraging partnerships between universities, research institutes, and private enterprises.
 - Supporting workforce development through industry-driven educational curricula.

By implementing these initiatives, the **Mekong Human Resources Development Program** seeks to create an inclusive, skilled, and adaptable workforce that drives sustainable development and fosters regional collaboration.

3. AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Advancing Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in the Mekong Region

Impact: The **Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) Action Plan** aims to foster **peace, prosperity, and people-centered growth** by enhancing agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, and improving rural livelihoods. The key intended impacts include:

- **Enhanced Regional Stability:** Strengthened cooperation in agriculture and rural development to promote peace and stability across the Mekong region.
- **Economic Growth and Food Security:** Increased agricultural productivity and income levels, contributing to regional food security and economic resilience.
- **Improved Quality of Life in Rural Communities:** Poverty reduction and livelihood improvements through sustainable farming practices, modern technology adoption, and capacity-building initiatives.

Outcomes: To achieve these long-term impacts, the ARD program is focused on the following key outcomes:

1. Improved Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction

- Increasing household incomes through diversified agricultural and rural development initiatives.
- Enhancing leadership skills and productivity in farming communities.

2. Strengthened Regional Cooperation and Dialogue

- Building stronger agricultural partnerships and diplomatic engagement among Mekong countries.
- Facilitating regular dialogues and joint initiatives to address common agricultural challenges.

3. Technological Advancement and Sustainability in Agriculture

- Promoting the adoption of smart agricultural practices to increase efficiency and climate resilience.
- Enhancing infrastructure and technology to support sustainable rural development.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the ARD program will implement a range of initiatives, including:

- ① **Joint Livelihood Improvement Efforts** ○ Establishing collaborative agricultural and rural development projects.
 - Forming joint task forces or committees to implement agricultural policies.
- ② **Cooperation Framework Establishment**
 - Signing bilateral and multilateral MOUs to strengthen agricultural cooperation.
 - Developing a framework for ongoing policy dialogue and regional collaboration.
- ③ **Capacity Building and Training Initiatives**
 - Conducting training workshops and seminars on agricultural leadership and best practices.
 - Implementing integrated rural development programs to empower local farmers.
- ④ **Smart Agriculture Development**
 - Organizing exchange programs for sharing best practices in sustainable farming.
 - Conducting feasibility studies on innovative agricultural techniques and technology adoption.
- ⑤ **Regional Food Security Measures**
 - Developing agreements and initiatives to stabilize food production and supply chains.
 - Promoting regional trade and investment in the agricultural sector.
- ⑥ **Market Information Exchange Platforms** ○ Establishing digital platforms for real-time agricultural market data sharing. ○ Encouraging cross-border trade and investment in agribusiness.

By implementing these initiatives, the **Mekong Agriculture and Rural Development Program** seeks to create a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive agricultural sector, ensuring long-term food security and economic stability in the region.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE

Strengthening Regional Connectivity and Sustainable Infrastructure Development in the Mekong Region

Impact: The **Infrastructure Action Plan** aims to enhance **peace, prosperity, and peoplecentered development** through improved connectivity, energy security, and trade facilitation. The key intended impacts include:

- **Regional Stability:** Strengthening cooperation in infrastructure development to promote regional peace and stability.
- **Economic Growth and Sustainable Development:** Enhancing regional connectivity and energy security to drive long-term economic growth.
- **Improved Livelihoods and Opportunities:** Increasing access to essential services, markets, and trade opportunities to uplift communities.

Outcomes: To achieve these long-term impacts, the program is focused on the following key outcomes:

① **Improved Regional Connectivity**

- Enhancing transportation and digital infrastructure to facilitate movement and trade.
- Reducing disparities in connectivity between urban and rural areas.

② **Energy Security and Sustainability**

- Strengthening energy security through regional cooperation on energy production and distribution.
- Promoting energy efficiency and sustainable resource management.

③ **Enhanced Trade and Business Integration**

- Improving business conditions through better infrastructure and logistics networks.
- Strengthening trade relationships among Mekong countries.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the **Infrastructure Action Plan** will implement the following initiatives:

① **Promotion of Connectivity Projects**

- Implementing regional development projects that enhance physical and digital connectivity.
- Aligning infrastructure projects with the **Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC 2025)**.

② **Infrastructure Construction and Upgrades**

- Developing and upgrading transportation networks, including roads, railways, and airports.
- Formulating master plans to improve urban and rural infrastructure.

- ③ **Enhanced Maritime and Inland Waterways Connectivity** ○ Improving port infrastructure and logistics to enhance regional maritime trade. ○ Strengthening intermodal transportation systems for seamless goods movement.

- ④ **Energy Security and Sustainability Measures** ○ Promoting cooperation on energy security and sustainable power generation.

- Implementing renewable energy and efficiency projects to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

⑤ **Support for MSMEs and Business Integration**

- Enhancing business environments for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- Encouraging trade and investment through improved infrastructure and connectivity.

⑥ **Facilitation of Trade and Investment**

- Strengthening policy frameworks to support cross-border trade and investment.
- Promoting digital infrastructure to streamline business operations and transactions.

By implementing these initiatives, the **Mekong Infrastructure Development Program** seeks to build a **resilient, efficient, and sustainable regional infrastructure network**, ensuring economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all.

5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Advancing Digital Transformation and Innovation in the Mekong Region

Impact: The **ICT Action Plan** aims to promote **peace, prosperity, and people-centered development** by leveraging digital technology to drive economic growth, improve governance, and enhance regional cooperation. The key intended impacts include:

- **Technological Diplomacy and Cooperation:** Strengthening cross-border collaboration on ICT projects to foster trust, knowledge-sharing, and mutual economic benefits.
- **Economic Development and Digital Innovation:** Expanding the digital economy, promoting digital transformation, and enhancing business opportunities.
- **Empowerment and Inclusion:** Improving digital infrastructure and public services to ensure equitable access and participation in the digital economy.

Outcomes: To achieve these long-term impacts, the ICT program is focused on the following key outcomes:

- ① **Technological Innovation and Adaptation**
 - Expanding the adoption of ICT-driven solutions to enhance productivity and efficiency.
 - Integrating emerging technologies to drive innovation and competitiveness.
- ② **Digital Economy Growth**
 - Promoting policies that support the development of a dynamic and inclusive digital economy.
 - Expanding digital infrastructure to enhance connectivity and business opportunities.
- ③ **Improved Quality of Life through Digital Solutions**
 - Developing smart city initiatives to enhance urban planning and public services.
 - Encouraging the use of digital governance solutions for better service delivery.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the **ICT Action Plan** will implement the following initiatives:

- ① **Implementation of ICT-Driven Projects** ○ Launching collaborative ICT initiatives that enhance regional connectivity.
 - Leveraging digital solutions to address regional development challenges.
- ② **Promotion of the Digital Economy** ○ Investing in digital infrastructure to support e-commerce and business innovation. ○ Exploring policies that promote digital trade and financial technology (FinTech).
- ③ **Establishment of Smart Cities** ○ Supporting urban planning initiatives through smart city frameworks.
 - Creating a regional smart city network to facilitate knowledge-sharing and innovation.
- ④ **Enhancement of Science and ICT Competitiveness**
 - Developing programs to foster innovation in science, technology, and digital transformation.
 - Strengthening capacity-building through training, research exchanges, and technical collaborations.
- ⑤ **Improvement of Public Governance through ICT**
 - Expanding the use of ICT in public sector management to improve service efficiency.
 - Implementing digital governance solutions to enhance transparency and accessibility.
- ⑥ **Cooperation in Digital Technology and Transformation**
 - Encouraging collaboration between governments, private sector stakeholders, and research institutions. ○ Promoting the ethical use of emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, and cloud computing.

By implementing these initiatives, the **Mekong ICT Development Program** seeks to build a **digitally inclusive, innovative, and interconnected region**, ensuring sustainable economic growth and improved quality of life for all.

6. ENVIRONMENT

Enhancing Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience in the Mekong Region

Impact: The **Environment Action Plan** aims to promote **peace, prosperity, and peoplecentered sustainability** by fostering cooperation on environmental conservation, climate resilience, and green economic development. The key intended impacts include:

- **Environmental Diplomacy and Cooperation:** Strengthening regional collaboration on environmental issues to build trust and ensure a sustainable future.
- **Sustainable Development and Economic Resilience:** Promoting green industries, low-carbon policies, and sustainable resource management to enhance economic stability.
- **Improved Health and Well-being:** Enhancing access to clean air and water, conserving biodiversity, and reducing pollution to improve quality of life.

Outcomes: To achieve these long-term impacts, the **Environment Action Plan** is focused on the following key outcomes:

① Resilient Ecosystems and Reduced Environmental Risks

- Strengthening cooperation for ecosystem conservation and climate change mitigation.
- Promoting sustainable environmental practices to enhance regional climate resilience.

② Improved Public Health and Well-being

- Enhancing access to clean water and reducing pollution to prevent health hazards.
- Strengthening conservation efforts to protect biodiversity and promote ecological balance.

③ Sustainable Resource Management and Green Economy Growth ○ Promoting

sustainable management of water, forests, and natural resources.

- Encouraging investment in green industries, eco-friendly cities, and sustainable business models.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the **Environment Action Plan** will implement the following initiatives:

1. **Cooperation for Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Protection** ○
Strengthening intersectoral partnerships for climate change adaptation and mitigation.
 - Promoting the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies.
2. **Pollution Reduction and Low-GHG Transport Promotion**
 - Sharing expertise and best practices to reduce pollution and carbon emissions.
 - Promoting low-carbon transportation solutions and sustainable mobility initiatives.
3. **Development of E-Mobility Ecosystems and Low-Carbon Cities**
 - Supporting the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) and green transport systems.
 - Establishing infrastructure and policy frameworks for low-carbon urban development.
4. **Biodiversity Conservation and Management**
 - Enhancing conservation efforts through partnerships and protected area management.
 - Strengthening the **Mekong-ROK Biodiversity Center** for research and ecosystem protection.
5. **Promotion of Green Industries and Eco-Friendly Cities**
 - Supporting the development of green industries to foster economic sustainability.
 - Enhancing cooperation in circular economy practices, eco-friendly manufacturing, and urban planning.
6. **Sustainable Management of Water Resources** ○ Strengthening regional frameworks for water resource conservation.
 - Promoting responsible and sustainable water usage practices.

By implementing these initiatives, the **Mekong Environmental Sustainability Program** seeks to build a **resilient, eco-friendly, and sustainable region**, ensuring longterm environmental stability, economic growth, and improved well-being for all.

7. NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

Strengthening Regional Security and Resilience Against Non-Traditional Security Challenges in the Mekong Region

Impact: The **Non-Traditional Security Action Plan** aims to promote **peace, prosperity, and people-centered resilience** by addressing transnational threats such as public health crises, disaster preparedness, and organized crime. The key intended impacts include:

- **Strengthened Regional Stability:** Enhancing cooperation to prevent and mitigate security threats, promoting peace and stability across the Mekong region.
- **Socio-Economic Resilience:** Improving public health systems, disaster preparedness, and law enforcement to strengthen communities against nontraditional security risks.
- **Enhanced Well-being and Human Rights Protection:** Expanding support systems for vulnerable populations affected by crime, disasters, and health emergencies.

Outcomes: To achieve these long-term impacts, the **Non-Traditional Security Action Plan** is focused on the following key outcomes:

① **Enhanced Regional Peace and Security**

- Strengthening collaboration among Mekong countries to combat security threats.
- Improving national and regional capacities to respond to non-traditional security risks.

② **Improved Public Health and Disaster Resilience**

- Enhancing cooperation on public health security, disease prevention, and crisis response.
- Strengthening early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms.

③ **Effective Response to Transnational Crimes**

- Developing stronger regional legal frameworks to address transnational crimes.
- Improving information-sharing and coordination among law enforcement agencies.

④ **Recovery and Reconciliation from Conflicts** ○ Supporting war

victims and communities affected by conflict.

- Implementing programs for peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.

Outputs: To achieve these outcomes, the **Non-Traditional Security Action Plan** will implement the following initiatives:

① **Close Coordination in Combating Non-Traditional Security Threats**

- Establishing mechanisms for regular coordination between governments and security agencies.
- Enhancing cooperation in addressing cybercrime, drug trafficking, and human trafficking.

② **Collaboration in Tackling Global Health Crises** ○ Strengthening disease surveillance

- systems and timely information-sharing.
- Promoting best practices in pandemic preparedness and public health management.

③ **Development of Monitoring and Early-Warning Systems**

- Enhancing regional capacity to monitor and respond to disasters, pandemics, and security threats.
- Supporting the integration of new technologies in crisis management.

④ **Regional Cooperation Against Transnational Crime** ○ Expanding intelligence-sharing and

- cross-border cooperation on organized crime.
- Strengthening regional legal frameworks to enhance law enforcement effectiveness.

⑤ **Strengthening Legal Infrastructure and Capacity** ○ Developing joint legal initiatives to

- address non-traditional security threats.
- Promoting legal reforms that enhance human rights protections and security measures.

By implementing these initiatives, the **Mekong Regional Security and Resilience Program** seeks to build a **safer, more resilient, and cooperative Mekong region**, ensuring stability and improved security for all.

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