



PRESENTATION

The Mekong River Basin - Searching for Transboundary Water Allocation Rules

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SUMMARY

The Mekong River is the dominant geo-hydrological structure in mainland Southeast Asia. Whereas water resources are more than adequate during the wet season, there are regional water shortages during the dry season, when only 1-2% of the annual flow reaches the Mekong Delta. Recent rapid agricultural and economic development in the basin has led to increasing competition among the riparian countries for Mekong waters. This development calls for a structured approach to the management of the basin, including efficient, equitable, and environmentally sustainable water allocation mechanisms that support the socioeconomic development in the region.

The Mekong Regime—comprising the lower basin countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam—has over more than four decades continued to successfully adjust its mandate and objectives according to the needs and political situation given. However, at the onset of the 21st century, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) is at a turning point as it attempts to negotiate a series of transboundary water allocation rules to achieve a reasonable and equitable utilization of the Mekong River waters, as envisioned in the 1995 Mekong Agreement.

This presentation introduces the geo-political situation of the Mekong River Basin and the general basin hydrology—water supply and demand across water-using sectors and countries. The organizations involved in water allocation in the Mekong River Basin will be introduced with a focus on the MRC. The challenges facing the MRC will be discussed, in particular regarding the negotiation of protocols for water allocation. The presentation concludes with suggestions to address these issues with the help of an aggregate economic-hydrologic modeling framework at the river basin scale.

A copy of the report on which the presentation is based can be downloaded at:
http://www.zef.de/download/zef_dp/ZEF-DP-38.PDF