

Seminar on the "Building Water Sector Youth Leadership Network in the Lancang-Mekong Region" Project Held in Beijing

On October 29, a seminar on the "Building Water Sector Youth Leadership Network in the Lancang-Mekong Region" project supported by the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Special Fund was held in Beijing, organized by the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center (referred to as the "LMC Water Center").

More than 30 representatives from the Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) of China, the Office of the National Water Resources (ONWR) of Thailand, the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research (IWHR), Fudan University, the Environmental Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University (ERIC), other governments, scientific research institutions, universities, enterprises, non-governmental organizations and project implementation units gathered to discuss the progress of the project and share the experience of exchange and training of young talents in the water industry.

Mr. Wang Wei, Head of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation, Consul of the Department of International Cooperation, Science and Technology, Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) of China attended and delivered a welcome speech. Mr. Dong Yanfei, Deputy Secretary General of the LMC Water Center, and Dr. Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa, Deputy Director of Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) Asia Centre co-chaired this meeting.

Mr. Wang Wei pointed out in his speech that as one of the regions with the greatest potential for economic development in the world, the Lancang-Mekong countries are faced with arduous tasks of improving people's livelihoods, protecting the environment and developing the economy. Also, the six Lancang-Mekong countries have a growing demand for hydropower and water resources, and face increasingly severe challenges from climate change. Therefore, coordinated efforts for the prevention and management of water

hazards, the protection and restoration of aquatic ecology, and the governance of water environment are directly related to the well-being and development of young generations. Young people are the driving force for social progress and serve as a bridge for international cooperation and exchanges. It is of great significance to strengthen youth capacity building, cultivate young talents with international perspectives and professional capabilities, support them to participate in regional water governance, and address water resource challenges through innovative solutions to promote the sustainable development of water resources in this region.

Mr. Suppanut Chaona, Plan and Policy Analyst of the Office of the National Water Resources in Thailand, also emphasized the critical role of young people in the sustainable development of water resources. He highly affirmed the significance of the project, pointing out that it brings together young leaders from the six Lancang-Mekong countries to extend the influence of young people to the international stage by formulating sustainable development goals and water solutions beyond national boundaries, thereby promoting the cultivation of young leaders.

Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa, Deputy Director of Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Asia Centre, introduced the background and progress of this project. She stated that SEI Asia currently supports the drafting of the Design of the Lancang-Mekong Regional Water Sector Youth Leadership Network and its Five-year Action Plan (2025-2029) to attract young talents, organizations, and networks to join, jointly strengthen cross-border water cooperation in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin, and promote sustainable development within and outside the region.

Zhang Ning, Director of China International Centre for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), introduced the specific situation of the cooperation between CICETE, UNDP, and Coca-Cola China in establishing and implementing the Water Program with the support of relevant Chinese departments.

In particular, together with the LMC Water Center, under the sub-project of the Water Program on Capacity Building for Sustainable Development of Water in the Lancang-Mekong River Basin, they supported the

formulation of the Five Year Action Plan on Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation (2023-2027) and the implementation of the Joint Research Program for Young Scholars from Mekong River Countries. He pointed out that the LMC Water Center will be further supported to play an active role in deepening research, exchanges, and cooperation with youth as the main body, promoting mutual learning and mutual benefit among young talents from Lancang-Mekong countries, jointly committing to the sustainable development of the basin and actively promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

Ms. Gao Xin, Director of Youth Programme, UNDP China, attended the meeting online. She noted that the UNDP China Office will rely on existing and upcoming initiatives to prioritize investment and empowerment of young people, promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in China, and adopt a four-pillar strategy to meet the needs of young people and ensure that their rights and interests are protected.

Mr. Gan Chun, Deputy Chief of International Student Affairs Office, Graduate School of China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research (IWHR), introduced the basic situation and training model of IWHR's domestic and international graduate education. He also shared a series of experience and practices of IWHR in training young talents in the water sector by combining examples such as international exchange student programs and short courses.

Mr. Wang Yinghao, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee, School of International Relations and Public Affairs of Fudan University, introduced the unique youth talent training program in the Lancang-Mekong region, focusing on youth exchanges and international cooperation in higher education in the region. He also pointed out that it is conducive to promoting the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and supporting the LMC mechanism.

Dr. Kromjit Chandrapanya, Project Advisor of Stockholm Environment Institute, Asia Centre, gave a detailed introduction to the Outline of the Lancang-Mekong Regional Water Sector Youth Leadership Network and the draft of its Five-Year Action Plan (2025-2029).

After the seminar, the project team and youth representatives visited the LMC Water Center. They watched a video themed on exchange and mutual learning on the protection of the Lancang River source region.

Mr. Zhou Zhiwei, Secretary General of the LMC Water Center, affirmed the achievements of the project, hoping that it can effectively connect young talents, organizations, and networks in the water sector, further increase the participation of young people in the region in joint projects and actions of the LMC, and enhance public scientific understanding of the water resources challenges faced by the six Lancang-Mekong countries.

Additionally, he said that with the support of these countries, the LMC Water Center will work with partners to provide more opportunities for young people to participate in the Lancang-Mekong water resources cooperation and inject youth power into the construction of the Lancang-Mekong community with a shared future.

After the visit, the project team and youth representatives went to Tuancheng Lake, located in the Summer Palace, for a field trip to learn about the economic, social, and ecological benefits of the first phase of the South-to-North Water Diversion Project since it was fully put into operation. Experts from Thailand said that the project has provided a guarantee for the water supply security of Beijing, and has implications for other countries.

The "Building Water Sector Youth Leadership Network in the Lancang-Mekong Region" project is led by Office of the National Water Resources of Thailand and jointly implemented by the Environmental Research Institute of Chulalongkorn University, SEI Asia and the LMC Water Center with strong support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. The implementation period is from 2023 to 2024. The project aims to promote the active participation of young leaders and relevant mechanisms in Lancang-Mekong water resources cooperation by strengthening youth partnership.

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