

**CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
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GIZ REMARKS

The MD is a crucial geographic region of Vietnam. It is not just a home of more than 17 million people but also importantly – the engine of the national economy, especially agriculture in which it contributes 31% to the GDP of agriculture sector, 50% to rice production, 65% aquaculture product, and 70% fruits [and 95% rice for export, and 60% fish for export].

These two main industries, agriculture and aquaculture involve over 75% of the people's livelihoods in the Mekong Delta. They are heavily dependent on the natural characteristics of climate, water resources and land resources. Changes in the physical and biochemical properties of all three resources, especially climate, will have major impacts on the ecology and livelihoods of the majority of local people.

Some key challenges the MD is facing

- Formed by sediments from the river and ocean and located in the last part of the river basin, the MD is used to be one of the richest and most fertile and productive deltas in the world. However, the flat topography (of less than 2 meters in average), the reliance over the river sediment, and the presence of both fresh and saline waters – are now turning into disadvantages and even, challenges.
- According to the updated climate change scenario, with a sea level rise of 1 meter, nearly half of the MD would sink under water in which 80% territory of Ca Mau province would be inundated.
- When global warming and climate change are getting along with anthropogenic drivers such as upstream water developments and regulations and local sand mining, the natural phenomena and disasters become even worse. The record events and consequent damages of drought and salinity intrusion in 2016 and 2020 or the recent alarming erosions along both West and East coasts are clear evidence.
- It is projected that, by 2050 the rice production of the MD would reduce by a total of 12% for the 3 crop seasons due to salinity intrusion, 1.3 million ha will be affected

by salinity by 2050. This is not only threatening food security but may also trigger associated issues such as rice exports – 90% of the rice export in Vietnam comes from the Mekong delta – or migration which has strong social and political implications.

- The overall situation is worsened by improper priorities and orientations such as agriculture intensification and quantity focus.

Responses and efforts of Vietnamese governments

To save the delta and ensure its climate resilient future, the Vietnamese governments have already started acting. Systemic and concerted efforts have been made towards building climate resilience for sustainable development of the region, across all sectors, territories, and levels of the hierarchy, from central to regional and provincial levels.

- **At central level**, key policies have been put in place in which the Government Resolution 120 (2017), the Mekong Delta Master Plan (2022), the Politburo Resolution 13 (2022), and the Government Resolution 78 (2022) are crucial guiding frameworks, setting out strategic orientations and actions for achieving sustainable development of the MKD in the emerging context of climate change and sea level rise.
- Besides that, national strategies such as Strategy for Climate Change Adaptation and Strategy for Disaster Prevention – also provide strategic and thematic orientations that are relevant for the MD.
- **At regional level**, a new regional entity - the MD Regional Coordination Council - has been established and started its operation. This is a crucial movement to improve the vertical and lateral coordination and collaborations between various sectors and territories.
- The construction of the “Mekong Delta Data Center” and the “Specialized Forecasting Center for Drought and Salinity Intrusion” was also kicked off.
- The “Program on modernizing irrigation system for agricultural transformation and development in ecological zones of the MD” (2020) and the “Irrigation planning for Cuu Long river basin 2022-2030 vision 2050” are under implementation.

- **At provincial level,** various efforts and actions have been implemented, and are on-going. Most importantly, the “Provincial master socio-economic development plan (SEDP)” with integration of climate change and disaster prevention – is in the final stage of preparation in all provinces.
- Most provinces have developed and are implementing the “Disaster prevention plan 2021-2025”, with budget from 400-1,000 million EUR.
- Many provinces have developed and are implementing the “Action Plan to respond to Climate Change 2021-2030 vision 2050”, with a budget also from 500-1,000 million EUR.
- Some provinces, depending on their specific location and conditions, have also developed and are implementing various thematic plans and projects/programs like for example on: *agriculture transformation and restructuring establishing sustainable rice value chain strengthening irrigation infrastructures for agriculture production and disaster prevention measures for riverbank and coastal erosion urban resilience or measures to enhance local water storage for production and disaster mitigation ...*

Key achievements to date

- On behalf of GIZ, I warmly congratulate the Vietnamese government institutions, partners, and local communities for the results that have been achieved during the last years.
- With legal and institutional frameworks being put in place, many measures have been implemented on the ground to shift and align the delta’s agriculture along the new “spine” of aquaculture-fruit-rice, from quantity to quality, and along the value-chain. The achievements are really encouraging!
- Adaptive and nature-based practices and solutions have been successfully introduced and adopted here and there, which serve as strong evidence and lesson-learnt for replication.
- Technology innovations and digitalization have been trialed and showcased at some localities and scales. The results are still rather modest, but the main achievement is that the need, role, and potential of innovations and digitalization have been well perceived and recognized.

Gaps to be filled, and the ways forward

Despite of many encouraging achievements, it remains a long way for the MD to arrive to its climate-resilient and sustainable development future. For GIZ, we perceive this as a learning by doing journey in which the followings endeavors are to be kept up:

- The climate change and development policy and institutional frameworks at all levels should be further strengthened, in which due attention should be given to social and gender inclusions – a shortcoming that has been existing for long.
- The regional coordination needs continued refinement. Different ministries having different coordination groups and offices. It is necessary to have a mechanism for effective and consistent coordination across regional borders, and in connection with surrounding regions.
- Local measures and solutions for climate change disaster prevention are to be continued in a refined and coordinated manner. Cross-provincial dimensions and implications should be studied and taken into consideration, especially in scaling-up.
- Implemented measures and practices for agriculture transformation should be reviewed to inform policy. Capacity and resources support, and the establishment of stable market and value-chain - remain as keys for success.
- Innovations and digital transformation have huge potential but also require adequate investment on research and development, technology transfer, and capacity development, and thus should be further promoted and integrated into development agendas.
- Concepts and approaches of circular economy need to be enabled and adopted, especially in agriculture sector. This is to ensure that the MD's production is more resources-efficient and climate- and environment- responsible.
- Last but not least, the participation of private sector and knowledge institutions such as universities, where CTU is a typical example is of crucial importance, to ensure the finance, market, technology, capacity and human resources needed for climate and development measures are provided and in place. Further investment to the legal frameworks and mechanisms is needed to realize this vision.

International supports

- The MD is crucial to Vietnam and at the same time relevant to many global issues including climate change. Therefore, it is also a priority region of the international community.
- Presently there are nearly 30 donors and development partners active in the MD, including multilateral ones like WB, ADB, IFAD or bilateral ones like the French, Italian, Dutch, Australian, Japanese and American Agencies for Development Cooperation, etc.
- *[International partners are assisting in many different thematic areas, such as: agriculture and food security; climate change (adaptation, mitigation, resilience); urban planning and resilience; coast and/or riverbank protection; water management and irrigation; education and vocational training; transportation.]*
- The German Cooperation (GIZ, KfW, BGR, DGRV) is one of the partners with the largest investment in the MD.
- The technical German Cooperation GIZ has a total of 14 projects in the MKD of which 9 projects are ongoing. *GIZ projects focus on the following thematic areas: agriculture and food security; aquaculture and fisheries; coastal and/or river-bank protection (also related to restoration of mangrove forests); climate-resilient urban planning; disaster risk management; regional coordination and implementation of new planning framework; water management and irrigation; plastic waste management.*

Climate change does not happen, start or end within one particular city or province. Therefore, it requires coordination in policy making at national level, regional, interprovincial, inter-sectoral coordination in implementation of legislation and projects/programs to address climate change. We strongly believe in the importance and the needs of multi-stakeholder cooperation to respond to climate change in the Mekong Delta. Therefore, we have been cooperating with Vietnamese partners at national, regional and provincial levels to integrate climate resilience on the legal framework and supporting the implementation in the Mekong Delta as well as foster regional coordination.