

Green plan for Lancang-Mekong

Roundtable sees sustainability and cross-border ties as keys to manage ecosystem along the river

By **LI YINGQING**
and **SHI WENZHI** in Kunming

Regional cooperative mechanisms for sustainable development will prove beneficial along the Lancang-Mekong river valley as cross-border cooperation deepens via the China-led Belt and Road Initiative, regional experts and officials said.

Participants in the Lancang-Mekong Roundtable Dialogue on Water Environment Management, held from March 21 to 24 in Kunming, capital of Southwest China's Yunnan province, agreed to the "green" strategy of development and to expand mutual assistance.

The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation is a sub-regional mechanism jointly established by Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Yunnan province represents China in building up the mechanism. The river is known in China as the Lancang, and downstream as the Mekong.

"Multiple patterns of cooperation

should be built up across the river region, at the country and local levels," Guo Jing, director of the International Cooperation Department of China's Ministry of Ecological Environment, told the forum.

While each member taps its own advantages, the region should promote dialogue in ecological policies, increase its capacities in natural protection and build up some exemplary projects that balance ecology with development needs. "By these efforts, we would surely contribute more to the sustainable development of the region," Guo said.

As an important part of Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Week, the dialogue on water environment management focused on the topics of solutions for water pollution, urban water environment and ecological landscape, and water quality test standards and technology in the countries of the Lancang-Mekong area.

During the week, the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Yunnan Office was inaugurated.



Zhou Guomei, deputy director of the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Yunnan Office.

Zhou Guomei, deputy director of the center, said at the inauguration ceremony that it aims to deepen cooperation in environmental protection between the six countries along the river.

It is a concrete measure in implementing policies for regional envi-

ronmental cooperation, Zhou said.

Since last year, China has been making progress in the construction of an ecological civilization as well as in environmental protection efforts. China also took an active part in regional and global environmental management.

The Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation center is part of China's efforts in promoting "green" construction and ecological planning to support South-South cooperation. The term 'South-South cooperation' refers to the exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries, which are also called countries of the Global South.

Priority areas under the mechanism include connectivity, production capacity, cross-border economic cooperation, water resources, agriculture, and poverty reduction.

Environmental protection has been highly valued by the Yunnan provincial government. In 2017, the province's forest coverage rate reached 59.7 percent and Yunnan became one of the Chinese province-

es with the best ecological environment.

Zhou said the Yunnan office will be responsible for the first session of the ecological management pilot project. "I believe the center will create a good and friendly base to share experience and come up with more communication and cooperation together."

Zhang Jihua, director of the Environmental Protection Department of Yunnan province, said the province will follow the rules on joint efforts and shared benefits so as to promote coordination among the nations and let the local people enjoy the fruits of these policies.

Wu Yusong, associate professor of the Rural Development Research Center at Yunnan University, said the Yunnan center will make cooperation projects easier. In the future, "we should keep the long-term communication system, be aware of the importance of cross-border cooperation and put in more resources to make the cooperation go further", Wu said.

SOMSANOUK PHOMMAKHOT
Director of the Soil and Water Pollution Control Division, Department of Pollution Control, in Laos



"I expect this roundtable dialogue to be fruitful and beneficial for us. We can learn and gain experience from this meeting, and we can use it to benefit my country. We have to discuss more how we can cooperate in environmental protection, and I believe that Lancang-Mekong environmental cooperation will be a long-term project."

CHAO NOKYOO
Director of the Inland Water Division, Pollution Control Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand



"The challenge for water environmental protection is the problem of water pollution in urban areas and the huge amounts of water wasted. And also in industrial areas all over the world. The members of the Lancang-Mekong region want to cooperate together to improve the water (quality). Our Asian countries are facing the problem together. Like the culture, the people, we are similar, so understanding each other is easy. This roundtable dialogue is a good gathering for cooperation and is useful in protecting the environment."

SRABANI ROY
Regional director, Greater Mekong, at Conservation International



"I think cooperation can happen very effectively in a gathering like this, where we have people who are working on water pollution issues every day. They can learn from each other and exchange information. It is vital to have this Lancang-Mekong environmental cooperation. China is investing in a lot of countries, which allows those countries to learn from China's good practices. China is the biggest investor in the Lancang-Mekong region, and this cooperation benefits both China and countries downstream."

ZHANG JIHUA
Director of the Yunnan Provincial Environmental Protection Department



"The Yunnan Center of Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation will strengthen the cooperation and communication between Yunnan province and countries in Southeast Asia. It will push us to protect our ecological system. We will cooperate more in protecting the water environment and biodiversity and creating a beautiful home for all mankind."

WU YUSONG
Associate professor of the Rural Development Research Center at Yunnan University



"We should keep the long-term communication system, be aware of the importance of cross-border cooperation and put in more resources to make the cooperation go further."

SONG HAINONG
General manager of Boshi Environmental Protection and Technology Company in Guangxi



"Having signed the cooperation contract with the Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center, we will promote our industry to go out across borders. Now is a good time to develop the environmental protection industry, and we can share and exchange a lot of experiences with Lancang-Mekong partners."