

# PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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## **Enhancing the capacity of the Lao PDR to participate in the international legal system**

Signing of the Project Document for International Law Project Phase III between the Government of the Lao PDR and UNDP

On 5 February 2009 H.E. Mr. Phongsavath Boupha, Vice Minister Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator / UNDP Resident Representative, signed a Project Document for the International Law Project Phase III.

The International Law Project is an initiative that started in 2002 in partnership between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP. Its main objective is the enhancement of the active participation and engagement of the Lao PDR in the international legal process, and to be responsive to the needs of the Lao PDR in international law.

At the signing ceremony in Don Chan Palace, Ms Rana welcomed the adoption of this latest phase of the International Law Project, resulting from the great success of the earlier Project phases and the excellent partnership between the UN and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She described how, together, the two previous phases of the Project - devoted to assisting the Lao PDR's ratification of international instruments and their translation into Lao and assisting with the implementation and monitoring of international treaties and their reporting requirements - have laid solid foundations in increasing the effective participation of the Lao PDR in the international legal system.

Some of the successes from the UN relationship with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the assistance of the previous phases of this Project have been seen in the increasing strength of participation by the Lao PDR in international instruments. This has been reflected recently in the impressive events to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the active role played by the Lao PDR is the negotiation and adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the signature of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Phase III of the Project is designed to build on these foundations through developing a comprehensive capacity development for the country to meet the demands of its increasing participation in treaties and in international law generally. While previous phases of the Project have been very successful, the ability of the country to absorb aid and to participate effectively in international law is undermined by lack of adequate capacity.

Within this Project, the development of capacity for the immediate and long term needs of the Lao PDR will include: specialist training for MoFA personnel, in particular in the Department of Treaties and Law and International Organisation; strengthening the capacity of institutions that provide training infrastructure in international law; providing training for the Judiciary, Line Ministries, law enforcement agencies and Civil Society Organisations in monitoring international law application and raising

awareness about it in the Lao PDR; and strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly in the adoption and implementation of treaties.

With its specific focus on capacity development, Phase III of the International Law Project will bring direct benefits to many. Over 500 students will benefit through assistance to the law faculties in teaching international law and the Project will assist up to 300 middle ranking officers from MoFA and Line Ministries to acquire specialist knowledge in international law. It will also assist interns to work in the Lao missions in Geneva and New York and enable MoFA senior officials to participate in international treaties conferences and UN Sessions, and 300 judges will directly benefit from training programmes. International law forums organized by the Project will benefit up to 1000 participants, women's organizations will benefit directly from gender specific seminars and workshops, and community awareness programmes conducted through the Project will directly benefit provincial and district authorities.

Throughout the Project there will be active engagement among UN agencies in the Lao PDR in the spirit of the 'One UN' model and the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to ensure that it delivers effective and efficient outcomes. The Project Document was developed through extensive national consultations from national stakeholders and development partners, with a significant part of the budget provided by Finland and the European Commission, both development partners during the first two phases of this Project. This Phase of the Project will last for 4 years and has an estimated budget of USD 3,825,000.

**Notes for editors:**

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