



**Pre-session to the National Assembly**

**Remarks by Ms. Olivia Yambi**

**UN Resident Coordinator a.i. Lao PDR**

**Vientiane, Tuesday, 6 June 2006**

---

**Hon. Mme. Pany Yathotou, vice-president of the National Assembly**

**Hon. Members of the Standing Committee**

**Hon. Members of the National Assembly**

**Distinguished members of the government, invited guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

**I am very pleased to be present here today at this important pre-session workshop of the National Assembly. May I begin by congratulating all the newly elected and re-elected members of the National Assembly of the Lao PDR and on behalf of the United Nations Country Team I take this opportunity to wish you all the very best of success in your very important role.**

**I am pleased to be here as part of this session on the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, in my capacity as the acting Resident Coordinator, and to share**



**this session with Mr Visieth Svengsuksa who represented the Lao PDR at the Millennium Summit in New York last year.**

**As you all well know, we are faced with a critical moment in our lives and the lives of those around us. The world faces unprecedented levels of poverty and suffering and despite decades of development assistance and foreign aid, the situation has not improved for most of the world's poor. The gap between the rich and poor seems to be growing daily. There are many reasons for this slow rate of global progress, but the main causes include insufficient and inefficient public spending, crippling debt burdens, inadequate market access in developing countries and importantly, declining foreign aid.**

**The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, signed off by world leaders and member states in September 2000 were intended as a concrete way to change this situation and fast track progress. World leaders committed to working in a unified and cohesive manner to lift people from poverty.**

**Within the Millennium Declaration is a set of goals – the eight Millennium Development Goals. Let's just take a minute to think about what they actually mean.**



**They mean “*no more broken promises*”.**

**They mean that *For the first time in history* – the world has agreed to work together to halve extreme poverty to set levels – within a set time period.**

**The Millennium Declaration and the MDGs themselves derive from international conferences and summits, where countries pledged to halve poverty, improve education, achieve gender equality, and protect the environment etc. However for the first time, governments agreed to a timeline - to the year 2015 - and accepted to be held accountable. The eight MDGs represent a reaffirmed commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter. But the goals themselves are not new to any of us, rather they capture the very essence, the very heart, of what we as development partners have been working towards for years. But the MDGs are a *new way* of focusing our efforts and realigning our support.**



**Specifically, by the year 2015, this government, as well as all the donor governments, as well as every ASEAN partner, every country in the region, and member states of the United Nations have agreed to:**

- **Halve poverty**
- **Achieve universal primary education**
- **Promote gender equality**
- **Reduce child and maternal mortality**
- **Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases**
- **Ensure environmental sustainability**
- **And develop a global partnership for development**

**Six years after the Millennium Declaration, we still have a long road to travel. The MDGs will only happen if they become a national reality, embraced by governments and people alike, when there is the realisation that they hold inherent benefits.**

**Being a set of benchmarks for assessing progress and enabling people to hold their leaders accountable, the goals help people promote the kinds of policies and actions that will create decent jobs, improve access to schools and improve the lives of ordinary villagers.**



**The goals and targets that have been set for the Lao PDR are the result of extensive dialogue and consultation between the government and the UN system, and they have been adjusted and modified for the Lao context. We believe they represent truly achievable and locally appropriate targets for our shared development efforts.**

**I am pleased to say that the Government has fully endorsed the MDGs and have incorporated them fully into the 5 year National Socio-Economic Development Plan. It is important to remember that we need to promote *behaviour change* to achieve the goals.**

**There is no doubt in my mind that the Lao government owns this process and that the government is committed to achieving the MDGs. The National Supervisory Committee on the MDGs has led this process and continues to drive it.**

**The Government has already launched its national poverty eradication strategy, which began as the NGPES and is now fully incorporated into the National Socio Economic Development Plan. This is the national strategic framework for poverty reduction in this country and is the Lao road map for achieving the MDGs. . It is extremely important that the MDGs continue to be built into all levels of development activities to**



**ensure that the MDGs are met across the diverse physical and social landscape of the Lao PDR.**

**The attainment of the MDGs thus rests heavily on the successful implementation and operationalization of the NSEDP, as well as other national development efforts. And with the "MDG picture" that the MDG report for Lao PDR presents, the government and its partners have a monitoring tool, which will prove invaluable in assisting with assessment of the NSEDP and poverty efforts in general. It is admittedly a long process, but I think that we have a good chance of achieving many of the goals in the Lao PDR by 2015.**

**There are some areas where this country is not on target. For example, the number of one-year-old children immunized against measles had fallen from 62 percent in 1996 to just 42 percent in 2000. Child nutrition and the number of underweight children has yet to improve over the last decade and continues to be worrying. And the report shows that significant efforts will be required in strengthening and supporting primary education for boys and girls if the education targets are to be reached by the year 2015. Some of the challenges facing the Lao PDR to meeting its targets are well known – disparities between rural and urban areas, gender disparities, and lack of physical infrastructure to access remote communities.**



**The purpose and value of the MDGs is that it also provides the government and partners with an opportunity to adjust the strategies to meet shortfalls in the MDGs if it is not on track. The MDG Report will be produced every few years so together, we can assess progress and revise our approaches if necessary. **The next report** will be produced in 2007. In this light, the MDGs are a tool for influencing policies and forging political will.**

**But this will not continue without sustained donor support – which brings me to goal eight – “create a global partnership for development.”**

**Although we don’t yet know how much the achievement of the MDGs will translate to in Lao PDR, I can assure you that it is not something that this government will be able to afford on its own.**

**It needs partners in the fight.**

**All countries in the world – including the donors – are locked into the eight goals. If we fail to achieve them, it will be the fault of the rich countries as much as the poor ones.**



**Finally, I take this opportunity to heartily congratulate all the parliamentarians for being voted into this dignified and impressive Assembly. You have our full support and commitment in assisting you to achieve the targets and goals laid forth.**

**We look forward to working with you to ensure that the lives of all Lao people, women and men, girls and boys across the country, and representing the richness and diversity of the Lao PDR, are improved as a result of the Millennium Development Goals process.**

**Thank you.**

**-ends-**