



International Law Project - Phase II
Annual & Terminal Review Meeting
Done Chan Palace, Vientiane, 5 February 2009

Remarks:

Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UNDP Resident Representative

***Your Excellency Mr. Phongsavath Boupoua Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Francesco Straniero, Representative of European Union, Delegation of the European
Commission***

***Helena Ahola, First Secretary, Development Corporation, Government of Finland,
Excellencies, Representatives of International Organisations, Distinguished Guests,***

It is my great pleasure to welcome you today for the last Annual Review Meeting for the International Law Project Phase II. I wish to extend a very warm welcome particularly to the representatives of our development partner Finland who have made the special trip from Helsinki & Bangkok to Vientiane for the Review Meeting.

The Annual and Terminal Review Meeting is a significant event in the calendar of the Project, signifying an end & closure of the current phase of the project.

Since this Review Meeting is the final one for Phase II of the Project, it also presents us, the opportunity to review achievements and lessons learned though the project period. It provides the basis for continued support to phase III of this important initiative of supporting the Lao PDR's growing engagement in the international legal system, which is becoming increasingly complex.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you are aware, during Phase II of the International Law Project Lao PDR was involved in the implementation and monitoring of numerous international treaties. It is no exaggeration to say that the International Law Project was a real success and the government has developed a solid sustainable foundation to meet the needs of the Lao PDR related international legal environment in areas of 1) international treaty action, 2) capacity enhancement and 3)

awareness raising. In all these areas, there was a strong focus on human rights, gender and development consistent with the Millennium Development Goals.

In the filed of international treaties the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made 22 separate proposals for signature, ratification or accession to international treaties to the Prime Minister's Office for consideration. The Lao PDR became a party to a number of human rights and environment treaties including the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and further 60 bilateral treaties and MoUs.

2008 was a particular important period in the international law calendar for the Lao PDR with the Lao PDR taking an active lead in the international negotiations on cluster munitions in Dublin and was the second to sign the Convention in Oslo. The country also participated in the UN Treaty Event 2008 in September and deposited the instruments for accession to the Convention against the Financing of Terrorism and the International Convention on the harmonization of Frontier Control of Goods (1982). The Lao PDR also signed the UN Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. It is only one of 4 countries in Asia to sign this convention.

In December 2008 the Lao PDR celebrated of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights with an impressive number of planned events and social awareness campaigns with over 1,500 people in attendance.

Through the Project, MoFA is able to offer technical assistance to various groups and organizations to meet specific international law needs. In 2008, MoFA through the Project organized no less that 45 seminars and workshops for both central and provincial authorities. These seminars directly benefited over 1500 participants in the year.

Consistent with the Paris and Vientiane Declarations, the Project had an important focus on capacity development. It supported an internship program for junior officers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the Lao missions in Geneva and in New York and conducted specialist international law course in Vientiane and Chiang Mai for 65 officials from MoFA and the line Ministries. These are some highlights – al lot has been accomplished, but more is required, which will be supported in the next phase. Special focus will be given to engaging the line ministries and critical stakeholders in the country to further strengthen implementation and monitoring of Lao PDR's national, regional and international legal commitments.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our development partners, particularly Finland and the European Commission. I would also like to thank the Government, MoFA and the line

ministries, from the provincial authorities and the several national organizations whose contributions have helped to shape this Project. I would like to take this moment to remember Somphet Khouakhoun who was instrumental in beginning this initiative and is no longer with us. Special thanks must also be extended to Mr. Khamkheuang the National Project Director, Mr. Phoukhong the Project Manager, Sam Blay the 2008 CTA and the UNDP Governance Team who support the project.

Thank you.

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