



Remarks

**Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana,
UN Resident Coordinator / UNDP Resident Representative**

**Signing Ceremony – UN Joint Programme
Support to an Effective Lao National Assembly (SELNA)**

UN House, Vientiane, 24 November 2008

Your Excellency Mr. Mr. Soulivong Daravong Minister of Planning and Investment,
Your Excellency, Madame Pany Yathotou Vice-President of the National Assembly,
Your Excellency, Mr. Thongteun Xayasene, Chief of the National Assembly Cabinet
Your Excellency Mr. Ajay Chhibber, Assistant Secretary General, UNDP Assistant
Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific,
Honorable Members of the National Assembly,
Dear Ambassadors, Excellencies, Esteemed colleagues from UN signatory agencies
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you here for the signing ceremony for the Joint Programme in support of the National Assembly. It is very appropriate that we celebrate this occasion in our new UN House as the Joint Programme puts the 'Delivering As One UN' spirit into action, bringing together several UN agencies and other development partners under one assistance framework .

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Constitution of the Lao PDR, adopted in 1991 and amended in 2003, designates the National Assembly as the highest organ of State, vested with representative, legislative and oversight functions. The capacity of the National Assembly to fulfill its constitutional mandate has strengthened over the years – from an initial People's Supreme Assembly established in 1975 with 45 members, of whom four were women, to the Sixth Legislature of today with 115 members, of whom 29 are women.

UN agencies have partnered the National Assembly since 1997, with support from several other development partners. In these eleven years there have been some

notable successes, and the lessons learned along the way have fed back into the evolution of the relationship.

Distinguished guests

Today, as we sign a new Joint Programme Document, it is appropriate to dwell briefly on some of the successes from the UN's relationship with the National Assembly over the years. A feature of this relationship has been the strong direction the Assembly has set for its partnership with the UN – which has spanned agencies such as ILO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNODC and WHO.

Significant progress has been made, with achievements including:

- Increased accountability of the executive to the Assembly, through strengthening of the oversight role of the legislature;
- Assistance to the Assembly to develop its long-term national development strategy and action plan, based on the principles of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness;
- The creation of a citizen hotline to the Assembly, streamlining and publicizing the petitions process, and publication of Lao laws (in Lao and English), which have contributed to increased awareness of the NA among citizens
- Strengthening the Women's Caucus, which is now noted regionally as a model of effectiveness.

Building on UN support, the Assembly has also been pro-active in developing partnerships with governments and other development partners. For example, a relationship with the Government of Singapore has allowed for translation of Lao laws into English; and the French Government has supported study missions on legislation drafting process and re-establishment of an Official Gazette. An exchange programme with the Parliament of Australia has resulted in secondments of MPs and staff to work on activities such as upgrading the NA website and developing an education kit for children on people's representation.

Distinguished guests

Based on the principles of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the new Joint Programme is closely aligned with the Assembly's strategic priorities. The new phase of coordinated UN assistance that is about to be initiated is based on the national strategic framework adopted by the NA at the end of 2007. It will bring

separate UN projects under a single framework, increasing alignment and harmonization of assistance to the Assembly.

This UN Joint Programme will cover much more ground than the current project, and in addition to the UN agencies involved it will be implemented in partnership with and generously supported by other development partners such as the European Union, Germany and the Government of Singapore.

Ladies and gentlemen

At this point it is timely to view the new Joint Programme not only as a best practice example of the 'Delivering As One UN' model. It is also important to see it as crucial support to the National Assembly, and through it to the Lao PDR on its way to become a State governed by the Rule of Law. Let me finish by saying how much I look forward to the next four years of UN cooperation with the National Assembly, in this climate of strengthening the role of this vital national institution, for the benefit of all Lao people.

Thank you

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