



Press Release

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Workshop for new parliamentarians promotes their role in achieving growth and poverty eradication goals

Vientiane, 5 June 2006: The entire National Assembly of the Lao PDR, comprised of 115 newly elected members, are in Vientiane for a three day workshop aimed at promoting the role parliamentarians and the National Assembly in Lao institutions, and on how they may help the country achieving the goals of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010. The workshop, taking place from 5-7 June in advance of the new assembly's first session, is being organized by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, with the support of the UNDP project on Strengthening the National Assembly of Lao PDR and the Lao Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (LAPPD).

On the first day, the Members of the National Assembly will discuss the role of the Parliament and their responsibilities to their constituencies. Days two and three will be devoted to the key role that National Assembly members can play in achieving health and education targets in the National Socio-economic Development Plan. The newly elected Assembly members will hear presentations and participate in discussions on the country's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals on education and health.

"Everyone supports the need to reduce deaths of children and women by half. Everyone also agrees that all girls and boys throughout the county should have the opportunity to attend primary school. We all want to reduce the number of people living in poverty," said Finn Reske-Nielsen, UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in his address to the new parliamentarians.

"These are the issues that the man or woman on the street in Lao PDR care greatly about and they are now fully integrated into the country's next 5-year National Socio-economic Development Plan (NSED). They were taken from a set of targets the Lao Government has pledged to achieve, along with other nations. These targets are known as the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs"

Among the eight Millennium Development Goals which the Lao Government committed itself to achieve by 2015 along with other nations, are ambitious targets to reduce poverty and hunger ensure all girls and boys complete primary education and to sharply reduce deaths of children and mothers.

“These targets present an important milestone for the Lao PDR to work towards in its efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve widespread improvement in the lives of the country’s poor,” the United Nations Resident Coordinator added.

The Millennium Development Goals are eight time bound and measurable development targets agreed to by all countries. These include halving extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and gender equity, reducing under-five mortality and maternal mortality by two-thirds and three-quarters respectively, reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, and ensuring environmental sustainability. They goals also promote greater partnerships between rich and poor countries on aid, trade, debt and technology.

The new parliamentarians’ workshop will include presentations from local and regional experts, including, National Assembly representatives, government representatives, ministers, UN agency heads and a distinguished Sri Lankan parliamentarian, Mr Kabir Hashim.

For more information: please contact Ms. Yasmin Padamsee Forbes or Ms. Soukphaphone Thongsavanh at UNDP Public Information Office + (856 21) 213390-5 ext. 187 or 210, yasmin.forbes@undp.org, soukphaphone.thongsavanh@undp.org