



Press Release  
For immediate release

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## Lao National Assembly members visit Algeria

Lao National Assembly members have deepened their understanding of the role women MPs can play in parliament as a result of the recent study visit to the People's National Assembly of Algeria. The choice of Algeria arose among other countries, because of the outstanding capacities of its women Parliamentarians to promote gender equity in the State's policy implementation. The Algerian Parliament had previously hosted, end of 2005, a delegation from the Vietnamese national legislature. Fostering gender partnership and mainstreaming are key activities in the United Nations Development Programme's projects supporting parliaments in Laos and Algeria. The visit was supported by the UNDP/EU project at the Lao National Assembly. This was the first time that the Parliament of Algeria hosted a visit by a Lao parliamentary delegation.

The gender-balanced delegation of nine people was led by H.E. Mme. Pany Yathotou, Vice-President of the National Assembly and included senior representatives of the Women's Caucus, which represents the interests of women in the National Assembly.

The study visit has helped MPs gain a greater understanding of how women parliamentarians can be involved in the legislative process and also to ensure that women's interests are effectively represented. Lao MPs observed the policy of the Algerian government in promoting women's representation at the highest level of the government as a result of strong commitment from the head of state. During the visit, the Lao delegation had the opportunity to meet several women ministers, including the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Women and Family Affairs, as well as representatives of a civil society organization which work in the area of eradicating illiteracy.

The delegation was able to learn useful lessons from the Algerian experience as the government has a pro-poor policy with a strong focus on education and health. All education from primary to university level is provided free with government support.

Besides the sharing of experience and expertise on promoting the role of women in parliament, the visit strengthened diplomatic cooperation between the two countries. Lao PDR has extended an invitation to the Algerian parliament to visit the Lao National Assembly in the near future.

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In the upcoming election for the new legislature, which is scheduled to take place on 30 April 2006, the National Assembly aims to increase women's representation in parliament from 23% to 30%.

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***Notes for editors:***

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