



Press Release
For Immediate Release

25 November 2008

‘Delivering as One’ in support of the National Assembly

Signing ceremony for Joint United Nations Programme: Support to an Effective National Assembly (SELNA)

On Monday 24 November Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, the UN Resident Coordinator & UNDP Resident Representative welcomed H.E. Mr. Soulivong Daravong, Minister of Planning and Investment, Madame Pany Yathotou Vice-President of the National Assembly, Dr. Ajay Chhibber, UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific and other distinguished guests to the signing ceremony in the UN House, Vientiane, for the Joint Programme in support of the National Assembly. Ms Yangchen Rana highlighted the importance of the Joint Programme, which puts the ‘One UN’ spirit into action, bringing together several UN agencies and other development partners under one assistance framework, of special relevance on today’s successful conclusion of the 2008 Round Table Implementation Meeting. This Joint Programme will continue 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.

UN agencies have partnered the National Assembly since 1997, with support from several other development partners. 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.

In these eleven years there have been notable achievements, several of which Ms Yangchen Rana outlined: 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 and publication of Lao laws (in Lao and English), which have contributed to increased awareness of the NA among citizens, and strengthening of the Women’s Caucus, which is known regionally as a model of effectiveness.

Based on the principles of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the new Joint Programme is closely aligned with the Assembly’s strategic priorities. It will bring separate UN projects under a single framework, harmonising assistance to the Assembly and bringing cost sharing benefits.

Mr Thongteun Xayasene, Chief of Cabinet of the National Assembly, welcomed the signing of this UN Joint Programme, noting that it is more ambitious in scope than the current project. The Programme will run from January 2009 until December 2012, and has a budget of US \$4,125,000. In addition to the UN agencies involved; UNODC, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM, it will be implemented in partnership with and generously supported by other development partners: the European Union, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Government of Germany, the Government of Singapore and the World Bank.

The Joint Programme document was signed by representatives of the National Assembly and six UN agencies: Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana for UNDP, Mr. Thongteun Xayasene, Chief of Cabinet of the National Assembly, Ms Silvia Danailov, Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Representative of UNICEF, Ms Mieko Yabuta, Representative of UNFPA, Ms Jean D'Cunha, Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM (who could not be present), Mr Leik Boonwaat, Representative of UNODC and Mr Michael Hahn, Country Coordinator of UNAIDS. The signing was witnessed by H.E. Mr. Soulivong Daravong, Minister of Planning and Investment and Dr. Ajay Chhibber, UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, currently visiting Vientiane on the occasion of the Round Table Implementation Meeting.

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Notes for editors:

The United Nations Country Team in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is committed to supporting the efforts of the Government to improve the life of all citizens, especially those most vulnerable. We shall continue to work closely with the Government and all development partners for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Our collective endeavour is to assist the people of Lao PDR to achieve progress and better standards of living for all.