



Joint Press Release
For immediate release

Vientiane, 10 September 2009

The European Commission and the United Nations join together in supporting the Lao National Assembly

The Delegation of the European Commission and the United Nations entered into an important new partnership today in support of the Lao National Assembly.

Mr. Henry Prankerd, Chargé d’Affaires of the Delegation of the European Commission to Lao PDR, and Mrs. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, exchanged signed copies of their financial agreement under which the Commission will contribute 1,100,000 Euros (US\$ 1,580,000) towards the total four-year budget of US\$ 4,125,000 for the Joint Programme of Support to an Effective Lao National Assembly (SELNA).

The ceremony was held in the National Assembly building in the presence of the Honourable Mr. Thongteun Xayasene, Member of the Standing Committee and Chief of Cabinet of the National Assembly.

As Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator, noted “The European Commission today confirms its continuing dedication to the sustainable development of the institutions of the Lao PDR.”

SELNA is a joint programme that brings together six UN agencies (UNODC, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNDP), the European Commission and the Governments of Singapore, Germany, Canada and Sweden in order to provide coordinated technical assistance to the National Assembly from 2009 to 2012. It will support the National Assembly to further strengthen its legislative, oversight and representational capacity through initiatives targeted for assembly members, the committees, their support staff, and the assembly secretariat.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr. Prankerd said: “Strengthening the capacity of the National Assembly is an essential element for the development of this country. By working in partnership with UNDP and other experienced partners we will help this legislative institution perform better its representational roles.”

Important advances have been achieved since UN support to the National Assembly first began over a decade ago, joined by the European Commission five years ago as a major contributor. The National Assembly’s role in passing legislation is acknowledged as highly substantial and significant progress has been achieved in making the Government and officials accountable as the citizens’ representatives, and the

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role of the legislature in reviewing people's petitions has contributed greatly to promoting the role of the parliament in Lao institutions.

In 2006, the European Union contributed 0.64 Million Euro to a programme for support to the National Assembly. This new joint initiative will build on the success of the earlier project.

The European Union and its member states together form the main foreign contributor to the development of the Lao PDR, and the objective of removing the country from the ranks of Least Developed Countries by 2020 is a common goal for both Government and donors. Progress towards this goal, remarked Mrs. Sonam Yangchen Rana at the ceremony "depends on improved governance, the advancement of public accountability, transparency, and certainty in legislation and regulations."

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