

# PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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## Strengthened Multilateral Environmental Agreements

UNDP and WREA celebrate 4 years of progress and discuss the way forward for support to the environment in the Lao PDR

On 19 May, 2009, the Deputy Head of the Water Resource and Environment Administration (WREA), Mr. Noulinh Sinbandith, and the UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Lao PDR, Mr Stephane Vigie, joined government representatives at an event to close the UNDP project "Coordinating the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in Lao PDR". The participants highlighted the achievements of the project, initiated in 2005, which has contributed significantly to improving national capacity to negotiate and implement global environment commitments.

Lao PDR is party to ten global multilateral environmental agreements, providing a framework for the country to cooperate with the international community in the protection of the global environment. Through issues including climate change, biological diversity, world cultural and natural heritage, the Kyoto Protocol and the international trade in endangered species, this global participation is an opportunity for the nation to seek financial and technical assistance to support the environmental protection activities required to ensure sustainable development.

In his remarks, Mr Vigie described how the 4 year UNDP project of support to coordinating Government implementation of multilateral environmental agreements – which was designed with technical support for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – "has enabled improved efficiency and efficacy of implementation of those ten multilateral environment agreements. This has been achieved mainly through strengthened institutional and individual capacities, increased national awareness of related issues, and the participation of Lao PDR in international meetings."

Major outcomes of the project include improved awareness of global environmental issues and a comparative analysis between multilateral environmental agreements and relevant national legislation - the first such by any ASEAN country - which has contributed significantly to processes of developing new legislative measures and revising existing ones. Other achievements encompass strengthened inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms and information exchange between convention focal points, and environmental education campaigns such a tree planting by schoolchildren.

The UNDP Deputy Resident Representative emphasized the importance placed by the UN on care for the environment as a significant factor in development. "And," he continued, "as UN Secretary-General Mr Ban Ki-moon emphasized only a few weeks ago in Vientiane, achieving the MDGs in the Lao PDR requires ensuring environmental sustainability".

The event was also an opportunity to look towards future UNDP support through discussion on the steps that will be taken to design a broad UNDP programme of support to the Environment Sector.

**Notes:**

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