



## Joint Press Release: WREA, UNDP, UNEP and SNV

18 September 2009: For Immediate Release

### Strengthening Negotiating Skills to Seal a Deal on Climate Change for Lao PDR

*UNDP, UNEP and SNV support training for the National Delegation of Lao PDR to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Climate Change Negotiations (COP 15) in Copenhagen later this year*

From 16 to 18 September 2009 the Climate Change Office of WREA, with support from UNDP / UNEP and technical assistance from SNV, is conducting an intensive training workshop in Vientiane for the national delegation of Lao PDR to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Climate change is one of the most important challenges ever to confront humanity, and no issue is more fundamental to long-term global prosperity. Any new agreement on climate change issues finalized in Copenhagen - the most important climate change conference since the groundbreaking gathering in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan - will have a significant impact on the development of Lao PDR and the potential impacts of climate change.

There is global consensus that climate change presents a critical challenge to the well-being of all countries, and particularly to the poorest countries and the poorest people of the world. Lao PDR's participation in the UNFCCC negotiations aims to support international efforts to arrive at an effective, fair and comprehensive global climate deal to address the challenges of climate change that face the world today.

As Mr. Stephane Vigie, Resident Representative (a.i.) of UNDP, described at the opening of the workshop, "Success in the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen can facilitate a fundamental transformation of the global economy, strengthening climate-resilient development, and assisting the world's poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to the impacts of climate change". The message, he concluded, is that "Climate change is likely to significantly affect efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015... Climate change is a central development challenge of this century. We have no choice but to address it with the urgency that it deserves."

With over 70% of Lao people depending on natural resources for their livelihoods and a national economy that heavily relies on the country's natural resource base, the people of Lao PDR are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Khampadith Khammounheuang, DDG Department of the Environment, WREA, emphasized that "the Lao PDR Government is determined to send a well prepared and aligned delegation to Copenhagen in order to communicate its position, join with climate

change allies, and strongly support an agreement that will combat climate change whilst facilitating the sustainable development and climate resilience of Lao PDR.”

The capacity strengthening programme launched at the workshop in Vientiane will serve the Lao PDR delegation to UNFCCC and other key staff from the Climate Change Office and the critical sectors of health, water, agriculture and forestry, as well as delegates from the Royal Government of Cambodia. The Programme aims to strengthen delegates’ impacts on negotiations, and includes information sessions on climate change and UNFCCC negotiations, technical training on topics relevant to Lao PDR such as the carbon market, REDD, adaptation, etc. Globally renowned resource persons will use their experience of multinational negotiations to assist the delegation to develop strong negotiating positions and skills.

This training, *Leading Climate Change: Making an Impact on UNFCCC Negotiations at COP 15 - Training for the National Delegation of Lao PDR*, is critical to support the preparation of the Lao delegation to develop and strengthen their national position, and strengthen negotiation skills to participate actively in Sealing a Deal on Climate Change in Copenhagen.

**Notes for editors:**

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**United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** UNDP is the UN’s global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

**United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** The UNEP mission is to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. UNEP in Lao PDR is partnered with the UNDP Environment Unit.

**SNV Netherlands Development Organization** SNV Netherlands Development Organization is a Netherlands based international NGO that delivers capacity development advisory services to over 2,000 clients in 32 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Balkans. In Asia SNV works with government, non-government and private sector organizations in Nepal, Vietnam, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Cambodia and Bangladesh. SNV’s 140 advisers in Asia work with local capacity builders and local actors, primarily those who operate at national and meso levels, in strengthening their capacity to effectively realize poverty reduction and good governance.

SNV aims to achieve development results in two areas: (1) increasing production, employment and equitable income opportunities in three sectors: Small Holder Cash Crop, Pro-poor Sustainable Tourism and Forest



Products. (2) improving the access, coverage and quality of basic services via our work in two sectors: Water Sanitation & Hygiene and Renewable Energy.

For the past 4 years, SNV has been developing capacities at WREA on pro-poor carbon finance, international climate change negotiations and the establishment of its Climate Change Office.

**About WREA.** Lao PDR's Water Resources and Environment Agency (WREA) was established on 10 May 2007, by Prime Minister Decree No. 149/PM, as the main coordinating agency for environmental planning and management across all sectors. Its responsibilities are set out in Article 36 of the Lao PDR Environmental Protection Law and include implementing the National Social & Environmental Action Plan, forming environmental policy, issuing and revoking of licenses to organizations involved in providing environmental services, receiving and evaluating Social-Environmental Impact Assessment (SEIA) and other environmental reports, and regulating agencies to curtail or modify activities that are having an adverse effect on the environment. WREA has a significant role climate change leadership in Lao PDR and throughout the Mekong Region. (For more information: [www.wrea.gov.la](http://www.wrea.gov.la))

**About CCO.** Lao PDR's Climate Change Office (CCO), WREA. In May 2008, the Prime Minister established the National Steering Committee on Climate Change (NSCCC) and the Climate Change Office (CCO) within Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA) to coordinate the development of both a national strategy to manage climate change and its impacts, and an action plan that details substantive climate change leadership, action, and programmes for Lao PDR.

**About UNFCCC.** The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC) is an international environmental treaty produced at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. The treaty is aimed at stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

The treaty as originally framed set no mandatory limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual nations and contained no enforcement provisions; it is therefore considered legally non-binding. Rather, the treaty included provisions for updates (called "protocols") that would set mandatory emission limits. The principal update is the Kyoto Protocol, which has become much better known than the UNFCCC itself.

The FCCC was opened for signature on May 9, 1992 after an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee produced the text of the Framework Convention as a report following its meeting in New York from 30 April to 9 May 1992. It entered into force on March 21, 1994. Its stated objective is "to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a low enough level to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system"[1].

One of its first achievements was to establish a national greenhouse gas inventory, as a count of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and removals. Accounts must be regularly submitted by signatories of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The UNFCCC is also the name of the United Nations Secretariat charged with supporting the operation of the Convention, with offices in Haus Carstanjen, Bonn, Germany. Since 2006 the head of the secretariat has been Yvo de Boer. The Secretariat, augmented through the parallel efforts of the IPCC, aims to gain consensus through meetings and the discussion of various strategies.

## **Background information**

### **The Training Aims to Help Lao PDR Have Impact on COP 15 Negotiations.**

*Leading Climate Change: Making an Impact on UNFCCC Negotiations at COP 15 - Training for the National Delegation of Lao PDR* will serve the Lao PDR delegation to UNFCCC and other key staff of the Climate Change Office, critical sectors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and Water Resource and Environment Administration) as well as COP 15 delegates from the Royal Government of Cambodia. The capacity strengthening programme aims to support delegates to impact negotiations, and includes the following topics:

- General information sessions on climate change and UNFCCC negotiations;
- Specific technical training on topics that are most relevant to Lao PDR (e.g. carbon market, REDD, adaptation, etc.);
- Assisting the delegation in developing negotiating positions and skills;
- Advising the delegation on how to organize themselves at COP 15;

**COP 15 Takes Place in Copenhagen, Denmark in December.** The United Nations Climate Change Conference will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark, between December 7 and December 18, 2009. The conference includes the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 5th Meeting of the Parties (COP/MOP 5) to the Kyoto Protocol. Success in Copenhagen is essential and can facilitate a fundamental transformation of the global economy, strengthening climate-resilient development, and, assisting the world's poorest and most vulnerable to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

UNFCCC COP 15 (December 2009, Copenhagen) will be the most important climate change conference since COP 3, which was held in 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. A new agreement is expected to be finalized in Copenhagen, which can have a significant impact on the development of Lao PDR and the potential impacts of climate change. The Lao PDR Government is determined to send a well prepared and aligned delegation to COP 15 in order to communicate its position, join with climate change allies, and strongly support an agreement that will combat climate change whilst facilitating the sustainable development and climate resilience of Lao PDR.

UNFCCC COPs have been usually attended by small Lao delegations. A larger delegation, however, attended Poznan (December 2008, Poland) last year, consisting of government representatives of WREA and MAF, as well as international advisers. Based on experience in this event, Lao PDR's newly established Climate Change Office (CCO) of WREA, supported by UNDP and SNV (TA), has conceptualized an extensive training programme to thoroughly prepare the Lao PDR National Delegation for

participation in the UNFCCC COP 15. The training will be held 16 – 18 September 2009 in Vientiane, and attended by approximately 35 leading figures in natural resources, foreign affairs, and environmental management in Lao PDR.

**COP 15 Aims to Enter Binding Commitments.** Clean development in Lao PDR, or other individual nations, alone cannot determine the composition of the world's atmosphere and the future of the global climate. It is this characteristic that provided the motivation for collective, global action under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). However, global action implies a multiplicity of decision makers. Decisions by intergovernmental organizations, national, regional and local governments, individuals, multinational firms, and local enterprises are all important.

The challenge for COP15 will be for the Governments to balance the interests of these stakeholders and seal an effective, equitable and binding global climate agreement. The agreement will apply to the period after 2012. COP 15's ambition is for the agreement to include as many countries as possible, and to contribute significantly to a reduction in man-made greenhouse gases which have a negative effect on our climate system. The Lao PDR National Delegation will therefore put all its efforts into obtaining an agreement that combines respect for the environment, livelihoods of the Lao people, the natural capital base, and long-term security of energy supply in the best way possible, on behalf of both the people of Lao PDR and of people throughout the world.

**Lao PDR has an Abundance of Environmental Resources.** Lao PDR has an abundance of environmental resources, including forest resources, water resources, biodiversity, land and others. This natural capital base is extremely valuable and important, to the people not only of Lao PDR, but indeed around the globe. The Government of Lao PDR always pays close attention to managing the environment, as well as its natural resources. This is illustrated in the Party's policies and resolution, socio-economic development strategy, priority programmes, as well as the poverty reduction projects of the Government of Lao PDR.

The potentially far-reaching impacts of climate change for the people of the Lao PDR led the Government of the Lao PDR to sign the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1995 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2003. In May 2008, the Prime Minister established the National Steering Committee on Climate Change (NSCCC) led by His Excellency Mr. Asang Laoly, and the Climate Change Office (CCO), headed by Mr. Syamphone Sengchandala, to coordinate the development of both a national strategy to manage climate change and its impacts, and an action plan that detail substantive programmes.

*"With over 70% of Lao people depending on natural resources for their livelihoods and a heavy reliance of the national economy on the country's natural resource base, the people of Lao PDR are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change,"* observed Mme. Sonam Yangchen Rana, Resident Representative, UNDP.

In order to support the Government in developing a comprehensive and consolidated response to national climate change challenges, a new initiative was formally approved with the Water Resources and Environment Administration (WREA) in late 2008, to

develop the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC and address the challenges of climate change. The overall development objective of this initiative was to strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of the Lao PDR to mainstream climate change concerns into sectoral and national development priorities, including the National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

To lead action on climate change on behalf of the people of Lao PDR, the government created a National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change, with the support of UNDP, which it published in April 2009.

Very little national data exists to determine how future climatic conditions may impact the environment of Lao PDR. What is clear is that the additional pressures on the natural resource base of Lao PDR will have serious consequences for the 73 percent of the Lao population that live in rural areas. These people are primarily farmers and fisherman who rely on natural resources including agricultural land, aquatic resources, forests and wetlands for their livelihoods. It is on their behalf, in particular, that the Lao PDR National Delegation will endeavor in Copenhagen.

**The Training Aims to Help Lao PDR Have Impact on COP 15 Negotiations.** Lao PDR's participation in the COP 15 UNFCCC negotiations aims to support international efforts to arrive at an effective, fair and comprehensive global climate deal to address the challenges of climate change that face the world today. This will encompass negotiations to ensure the necessary technological, financial and human resources to effectively reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses and to adapt to the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events..

The capacity strengthening programme will serve the Lao PDR delegation to UNFCCC and other key staff of the Climate Change Office, critical sectors (health, water, agriculture and forestry), and COP 15 delegates from the Royal Government of Cambodia. The capacity strengthening programme aims to help delegates impact negotiations, and includes the following topics:

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