



PRESS RELEASE

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Launch of the National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change (NAPA) and the National Capacity Needs Self Assessment (NCSA) for Global Environment Management

On May 21 2009, the Water Resource and Environment Administration (WREA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched the National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change (NAPA) and the National Capacity Needs Self Assessment (NCSA) for Global Environment Management. These two projects have been implemented by WREA, supported by UNDP, and have received funding from the Global Environment Facility and the Least Developed Country Fund. They have enabled Government to, firstly, identify key priorities for adapting to climate change in the Lao PDR and, secondly, prioritize capacity needs to strengthen implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

During her remarks, her Excellency, Mme Khempheng Pholsena, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Head of WREA reaffirmed "...the commitment of the Government of the Lao PDR to work together with our development partners to minimize the impacts of climate change on the development of the Lao people through effective adaptation activities."

As Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana, Resident Representative of UNDP, described at the launch, the global climate is changing and threatens our future – we all witness changes in average temperatures, shifts in seasons and an increasing intensity of extreme weather events such as flooding and drought, including here in the Lao PDR. The effects are already visible and will worsen in the future. The associated economic, social and environmental impacts are large and it is often the poorest people who are most significantly affected. The message, she concluded, is that climate change is no longer just an environmental issue. It is deeply rooted across all sectors of development. As Ms Rana emphasized, "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 80% 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. For example, based on a 2007 country-wide National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment conducted by WFP, it is estimated that up to 46 percent of the rural population in Lao PDR - approximately 188,000 households most of whom are living in lowlands - are vulnerable to drought. This is in addition to the 2 percent of people who are already chronically food insecure

Adapting means learning to live with the changes generated by climate change. The estimated annual costs of adaptation in developing countries vary greatly, but often exceed USD 80 billion per year. The NAPA reviews the predicted impacts of climate change on Lao PDR, and also assesses and prioritizes possible adaptation options. It has identified 45 project proposals that are key to adapting to climate

change, with a focus on the four sectors of agriculture, forestry, water and water resources and public health. The projects, developed for flood and drought prone areas, include strengthening the capacity of the National Disaster Management Committees, community participation in the development of improved systems for the sustainable use of drinking water, reforestation, further development of early warning systems, amongst others.

The National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment for Global Environment Management (NCSA), also launched at the event, has provided the Government with an opportunity to identify key cross-cutting capacity needs for the effective implementation of the three Rio Conventions: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 1992); the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD, 1992), and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD, 1994).

The NCSA has enabled the Government of Lao PDR to identify and characterize the nature of critical capacity constraints and priority capacity needs at national, institutional and individual levels related to global environmental management, with a focus on the implementation of the Rio Conventions in Lao PDR. The NCSA also provides concrete recommendations for strengthening cross-cutting capacity needs of Lao PDR to take appropriate decisions and actions to address key biodiversity, climate change and land degradation issues.

Together, the National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change and the National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment for Global Environment Management provide an important resource for all stakeholders who are currently working in the areas of climate change, biodiversity and natural resource management, poverty reduction, and sustainable human and economic development in Lao PDR.

Notes:

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