



Leadership Forum
30th-31st March 2010

Opening Remarks by Mr. Dirk Wagener
UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (P) a.i.

(check against delivery)

Dr. Khammoune Viphongxay, Vice Chairperson, Public Administration and Civil Service Authority;

Prof. Dr. Kikeo Khaykhamphitoune, President, National Academy of Politics and Public Administration

Ms Nicolette Matthijsen, Country Director SNV and Honorary Consul of the Netherlands

Distinguished representatives of Ministries and Government Departments of the Lao PDR

Private sector and Civil Society representatives,

Esteemed development partners, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to open the 2010 Leadership Forum. Continuing from the successful 2007 Forum, I am delighted to see so many participants from different backgrounds today which demonstrates our shared understanding of the importance of leadership development in the development process of the Lao PDR.

At UNDP we are proud to support and host this event in partnership with the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority National, the Academy of Politics and Public Administration, and the Netherlands Development Organization SNV.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Leadership is more important than ever in a time where the Lao PDR does experience rapid economic growth and undergoes a process of accelerated regional and global integration. This process – with all its benefits and welcome developments – brings with it numerous challenges which require strong and inclusive leadership at all levels to be successfully tackled.

Indeed, if Laos is to achieve the MDGs by 2015, and to graduate from *Least Developed Country* Status by 2020, it will need to address critical issues such as rural-urban disparities and growing

inequalities. Though poverty levels have been declining over the past 2 decades there are still too many who live under the poverty line or who do not have access to basic health and education services.

For today's forum I would like to highlight three key leadership issues on which we will be focusing during the next two days, and which I believe are of crucial importance to Lao PDR:

First, there is leadership for **inclusiveness**: meaningful participation in decision making of all actors in society including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups but also civil society as a whole is a challenge. Creating and maintaining such inclusiveness and to provide all people of the Lao PDR with a voice to express their aspirations requires leadership. UNDP has been – for example – supporting the first ever community radio station in Khoun District, Xieng Khouang Province where community volunteers actively engage in the development of their district and make their voices heard. These volunteers demonstrate leadership.

Second, there is leadership for **quality**: if public services are to reach all people of the Lao PDR and if the MDGs are to be reached by 2015 the quality, as well as effectiveness and efficiency of these services needs to be ensured. This also means being accountable for the transparent delivery of these services, and the willingness to

actively engage in quality control, performance assessments, and organizational development to make this change happen. PACSA, in particular, has been spearheading some of these desired and much needed changes with regard to Human Resource and organizational development and is providing leadership in the reform process for more effective service delivery.

Third, there is leadership for sustainability: Addressing global problems affecting Lao PDR, such as natural disasters and climate change, require leadership. There are no simple solutions for these complex challenges and we need to draw on the lessons learned, nationally and internationally, and work in close partnerships to address these global issues in a sustainable manner.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenge, however, is how to best translate these leadership characteristics or qualities into practice. Leadership development, and improved coordination and alignment of leadership development initiatives in Laos can play a very important role in this regard and that is why we have gathered here today for this 2-day forum.

The forum will allow actors from the public and private sector, policy makers, development partners, INGO's and non-for-profit organizations to exchange best practices, share inspiring case studies, expand their networks and provide inputs and ideas for future plans of improved coordination and alignment of leadership development initiatives. Various key note speakers will underline various aspects of leadership development and during several panel discussions national and international leaders will share their experiences.

I am confident that we will leave this Forum with a renewed determination to take forward the close cooperation between all partners and the government in leadership development.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm UNDP's commitment to the Lao Government and to the Lao people, to continue supporting your efforts towards achieving the national goal of leaving the ranks of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) by 2020, with the intermediate goal of achieving the MDGs by 2015. For this we need each and every one of you here in the room to provide leadership.

I wish this workshop and follow-up activities all success and I wish you good health. Khop Chai.