

**Governance Sector Working Group Meeting on
14th October 2009**



**Opening Remarks by Mr. Stéphane Vigié
UNDP Deputy Resident Representative**

Your Excellency Dr. Chaleune Yiapaoher, Minister of Justice,

Your Excellency Mme. Bounpheng Mounphoxay, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office and Chairperson of PACSA,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today to deliver these opening remarks on behalf of Mme Sonam Yangchen Rana, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative.

The presence of so many partners today, testifies to the centrality of governance in the development process of the Lao PDR. Indeed, if Laos is to achieve the MDGs by 2015, and graduate from *Least Developed Country* Status by 2020 it will of course need to address head on critical issues related to child malnutrition, maternal mortality and the sustainable use of natural resources. But, it will also need to work on improving service delivery across all sectors, improving financial management, increasing people's participation and developing a state fully governed by the rule of law - this is why these themes form the core of the *Strategic Plan on Governance* and will be the focus of our attention here today.

When we last met in 2008, we highlighted a number of difficult challenges impeding progress in the governance sector. We also pledged to jointly help address these challenges through a strengthened SWG architecture feeding into the Round Table, to demonstrate that aid coordination and aid effectiveness do produce tangible results.

Today, it is therefore particularly rewarding to be able to report on the significant progress achieved during the year. There will be comprehensive presentations on this year's achievements this morning but I would like to highlight four of them already, which have all received support from various development partners:

- The Decree on Non-Profit Associations has been adopted giving national civil society a legal framework to contribute to poverty reduction and participate in the country's development.

- The Legal Sector Master Plan has been endorsed by Government, paving the way for sustained and sector-wide reforms in the legal sector.
- Several very important international conventions have been ratified by Lao PDR, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.
- The country has also reported on its CEDAW implementation and has taken a lead role in the international arena in the fight against cluster munitions.

Now, all this is a result of the Lao PDR's strong commitment to action and I would like to commend and congratulate the Government on these achievements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year the co-chairs and the members of the GSWG demonstrated their commitment to a harmonized and aligned approach to governance by reviewing and strengthening the Sector Working Group and its two Sub-Sector Working Groups. I am pleased to note that the GSWG is now fully operational and that high level leadership is being provided to leverage its impact and to take the partnership forward. I would like to express UNDP's appreciation to PACSA and the Ministry of Justice for critical role they have played, but also to the European Commission and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation who are co-chairing the new sub-working groups.

The Governance Sector Working Group and its two sub-working groups constitute now a platform for joint reflection as well as joint action by government and development partners. Going forward, it will be important for them to organize thematic workshops around key governance issues. The Group and Sub-groups will also need to think how to contribute to the next NSEDP which has identified governance and legal reform as one of its key sectors of attention. A new *Strategic Plan on Governance* – based on the NSEDP and Party Congress resolutions – will also be formulated and the Governance Sector Working Group has to take the lead in supporting the government in this crucial exercise.

I would like to emphasize that a strong Governance Sector Working Group Secretariat is a precondition for the effective coordination of the substantive and technical tasks of the Sub-Sector Working Groups and the Governance Sector Working Group. Now, that the activities of the Governance Sector Working Group and the Sub-Sector Working Groups are in full swing and being further expanded, the right institutional support needs to be provided. UNDP stands ready to assist in this regard.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have gained considerable momentum within the sector and as we approach the next NSEDP and Party Congress, this is the right time to agree on the key steps to be taken to further strengthen governance.

Recent evaluations and reviews highlight how critical the implementation challenge is across all sectors and ministries. Many new policies and frameworks have been formulated with the support of the highest authorities of the country. Now, we have to ensure that these policies are implemented and that they contribute to improved delivery of services and poverty reduction. Development partners need to continue to assist the government in this area.

I am convinced that we will leave this meeting with a renewed determination to take forward the close cooperation between development partners and the government in the governance sector. I wish this meeting and follow-up activities all success. I wish you all good health and thank you for your attention.

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Notes:

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