



Lao PDR

Workshop on Implementation of the Legal Sector Master Plan

Opening Remarks by Mme. Sonam Yangchen Rana

UN Resident Coordinator / UNDP Resident Representative

27 March 2009, Don Chan Palace Hotel, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Your Excellency Mr Ket Kiettisack, Vice Minister of Justice

Distinguished Guests from line ministries and all legal institutions and agencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to co-chair this workshop which will consider implementation measures for the Legal Sector Master Plan. This is a new and important step in an ongoing process to formulate and then to assist the government to implement long-term systemic reform in the Lao legal and judicial sector. This workshop builds on an earlier workshop held in November and is the latest in a range of initiatives supported by the United Nations, the Government of France and other partners to promote the rule of law in the Lao PDR.

Our aim is to move the reform process forward by drawing the various initiatives of reform together, binding them into a greater framework, and addressing assistance gaps where they exist.

A sound legal and judicial sector is an absolute imperative for the Lao PDR to achieve its national development goals and the MDGs. Indeed, it is a prerequisite to economic growth, the creation of a market economy and private sector development. Likewise, it is a prerequisite to further regional and international integration. The Lao PDR needs a strong legal and judicial sector to fulfill its current - and future - international obligations and to take its rightful place in the international community.

Enhancing access to justice for all citizens, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, can empower them with the means to raise themselves out of poverty, to fully exert their rights and to meet their own obligations to society. This is the very objective that the Legal Sector Master Plan seeks to achieve.

The Legal Sector Master Plan, although still only a draft, represents a clear commitment to enhancing the rule of law in the Lao PDR. Once endorsed, it will be a clear reaffirmation of the Government's intent to achieve this objective as set out in the 1991 Constitution and 2003 constitutional amendments, and an effective step towards converting a policy expressed in Party Resolutions into reality.

The Plan is a comprehensive and practical statement of the needs and challenges facing the legal system in Laos. It sets out the principles and specific actions guiding the development of Laos as a rule of law state and it has been prepared through extensive consideration and consultation.

Perhaps its greatest innovation is its sectoral perspective, drawing together all stakeholders involved in the legal sector. The Plan will require the coordinated and sustained effort of many agencies and partners over a long period of time. Ensuring such coordination is one of the major challenges of implementation. This will demand dedication and commitment at the highest levels of government as well as significant human and financial resources.

I am very pleased, therefore, that today's workshop brings together senior officials from the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary, the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Line Ministries, as well as representatives of the broader national legal community and, of course, of the international community. This is an indication of the high level of interest in the Plan and in the wider development of the legal sector.

A good start is vital. If firm foundations and processes are established and early reforms are well-grounded and comprehensively executed, there will be scope to build upon and expand

both the core activities and new or more complex areas. Achieving early success can encourage still greater commitment and involvement for the future.

Thank you. [ends]

Notes:

For more information please contact Janet Pontin at the UNDP Public Information Office

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