



Official inauguration of the United Nations House and Launch of the MDG Progress Report

Vientiane, 11 April 2009



Introductory Remarks Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Activities In the Lao People's Democratic Republic

Your Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN

*Your Excellency Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman*

It is a great privilege and an honour for me to join His Excellency Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister, in welcoming our chief guest - the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon – to Lao PDR and to the UN House today.

On behalf of the United Nations Country Team here in Laos and all of us present here from Government, from bilateral and multilateral agencies, from civil society and the people of Laos – we want to let you know that we have waited for a long time for this to happen.

It has been almost a quarter of a century since the last visit of a United Nations Secretary-General, and today is therefore a historic event. And we want to say **thank you Your Excellency Ban Ki-Moon** for taking the time to visit us here today, for showing us that small, peaceful countries do matter. And we promise you a memorable visit.

Today's ceremony is about partnerships: And above all, the partnerships between the Government and its development friends, united in the shared goal of improving the lives of the Lao people.

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to the Government, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the leadership of H.E. Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, and to all the other Government leaders and officials who have done so much in the past years to make this building and event possible today.

With its striking blend of Lao and modern architecture, this outstanding building embodies the long history of cooperation and trust between the Lao Government and the United Nations – a relationship nurtured over decades, and which, we have no doubt, will continue to grow in the years ahead.

This UN House will provide a joint home to nine UN Agencies. Our location places us close to the heart of the rich Lao history and culture – with views of Patuxay and Wat Tat Foun – and near the World Peace Gong awarded to Laos last year.

Our compound is shaded by one of the oldest and most gracious trees that exist in this country, a living reminder of the country's rich environmental heritage, which we will take great care to preserve.

Of course what makes today's event even more significant is the presence of the UN Secretary-General – the champion of the Millennium Declaration – for the launch of a report on Lao PDR's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

With the commitment of the Government of Laos and your encouragement and support – Mr. Secretary-General – I hope we can and will move quickly from recommendations to action that will rid this young and fast changing country from poverty and need. And in so doing, we can help realize the Government's aspiration to graduate from least developed country status by 2020.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last but not least, I want to take this opportunity to thank all our donor and development partners for your continuing generous support and commitment over many years, which makes our work, here in Laos and elsewhere, possible.

Thank you all again for your participation.

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