

Terminal Review Meeting for project “Coordinating the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in Lao PDR”



**Remarks by: Linda Norgrove
Head of UNDP/UNEP Environment Unit**

On behalf of
Sonam Yangchen Rana
UNDP Resident Representative

Vientiane, Lao PDR
19 May, 2009

*Distinguished guests and participants,
Ladies and gentlemen*

It is a great pleasure to be here with you at this terminal review meeting of the project “Coordinating the Implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements in Lao PDR”.

We have come together today with two aims in mind.

We are here to highlight the achievements of this project - implemented over the past five years by WREA.

And we are also here to outline the way forward - the steps that will be taken to design a more comprehensive future programme of support to the Environment Sector.

This afternoon I am happy to see government counterparts from many sectors along with colleagues from UNDP. I would like to join Mr. Noulin Sinbandith in extending a warm welcome to you all.

This project of support was signed with STEA - now WREA - in 2004. The overall objective for all partners has been to improve the national capacity to negotiate and implement global environment commitments, and to develop a more strategic approach to the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements within the country.

We all recognize the complexity of this project - dealing with multiple Ministries, many issues, and the ten multilateral environmental agreements to which Lao PDR is a signatory, which range from land degradation to climate change. But despite the challenges, the project’s achievements have been substantial. Under the leadership of Mme Keobang A, the project has enabled improved efficiency and efficacy of implementation of those ten multilateral environment agreements. This has been achieved

mainly through strengthened inter-sectoral coordination and communication between focal points, increased awareness of related issues, and the participation of Lao PDR in international meetings.

The technical reports produced during the project development included a comparative analysis between Lao PDR's obligations under these agreements and those of relevant national legislation - the first such analysis by any ASEAN country. This analysis has contributed significantly to processes of developing new legislative measures and revising existing ones.

Within the framework of this project, we have also been able to support WREA to conduct environmental education and awareness raising. Working with the general public, and particularly school children, this has involved tree planting in twenty villages and twenty-one primary schools. These direct interventions will surely increase the levels of knowledge of our future generations on the importance of sound environmental management.

Throughout the project, national ownership has been strong. As a result of WREA's management of the process and project implementation, the managerial and technical capacities of participating government officials have been strengthened significantly - in both project management and the related technical areas of the ten multilateral agreements.

Ladies and gentlemen

Although today we are marking the closure of this project, we are also looking forward. In order to set the groundwork for the next steps to future joint achievements, UNDP is beginning a period of evaluation and reflection on our support to the environment sector in Lao PDR.

We currently have an independent consultant realizing an evaluation of past support and identifying key components of our support to the environment for the future. We are confident that through detailed discussions with WREA, other related sectors and development partners, we will continue strengthening our support in this crucial area.

Ladies and gentlemen

Achieving this target in Lao PDR will be challenging. It requires comprehensive and consolidated support from multiple development partners. UNDP, together with UNEP, will continue working to improve our delivery in the area of Environment. Our focus will include – but not be limited to - supporting the Government to develop the Poverty Environment Initiative, address the challenges that climate change poses to the country, and to strengthen environment and social impact assessment processes.

Once again, on behalf of UNDP, I would like to express my gratitude to WREA and to all the government agencies concerned for your valuable inputs and cooperation during the implementation of this project.

Notes:

For more information please contact

Janet Pontin, UNDP Public Information Office, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Tel: 267777 ext: 715, Email: janet.pontin@undp.org

Or

Linda Norgrove, Head of the Environment Unit, UNEP/UNDP, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Tel: 267777 ext: 710, Email: linda.norgrove@undp.org

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.