



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

2010 Annual Review Meeting
The International Law Project Phase III
16 December 2010

Ms. Viengvone Kittavong, Acting Director General of the Department of
Treaties and Law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Henry Prankerd, Charge d'Affaires a.i., European Union

Ms Helena Ahola, Counsellor & Head of Development Cooperation,
Embassy of Finland,

Participants from Government Ministries and Departments,

UN Agencies and Development Partners,

Distinguished Participants, ladies and Gentleman

It gives me great pleasure to co-chair this 2010 Annual Review Meeting of the International Law Project Phase III. As Madam Vienvong Kittavong has just noted, the Annual Review Meeting is an important occasion that brings together government representatives, development partners and beneficiaries to take stock of the Project's activities for the

year and to map out future directions. It also allows us a good opportunity to discuss lessons learned and how the Project can best achieve its objectives.

For the UNPD, the International Law Project is without doubt one of the most important and indeed most successful development initiatives in the Lao PDR. It is also one of the most productive and busiest. Madam Viengvong Kittavong has already touched on some of the Project's activities, and I am also aware that the Project Manager will soon make a presentation to provide a more comprehensive overview of the year in review for the Project. However, as co-chair let me highlight a number of points of relevance to our meeting today.

2010 has been a significant year with several important activities on the international calendar for the Lao PDR. Earlier in the year the country participated very successfully and for the first time in the Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights Instruments. The Lao Government also submitted its report on CEDAW. It further ratified or signed five international instruments which included one human rights treaty, one anti-terrorism treaty and two instruments on the environment. So far, the Lao PDR has thus ratified six core human rights instruments.

From all the reports I have received and from my own observations and newspaper reports, the International Law Project has been the main force that has provided technical assistance and resources to assist the government in these efforts. The Project is

currently actively engaged in helping the Law PDR to develop strategies to implement Recommendations that it accepted under the Universal Periodic Review by the Human Rights Council. I am pleased to say that if there is one subject matter that is receiving increasing attention in the Lao PDR today, it is human rights and I am glad that such an open and constructive engagement is underway on this matter.

The Project's work has, however, not only been confined to the promotion and progressive realization of human rights standards in Laos. I am aware that the project provided vital assistance to help the Lao PDR's ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in 2009 and only yesterday I was joined the Government celebrations making the 2010 Anti-Corruption Day. The Project is now engaged in helping to build the country's capacity in the UNCAC Peer Review Mechanism and its capacity in reporting under the various treaties it has ratified.

In addition to these areas I have mentioned, I am aware that the Project has been actively engaged in capacity enhancement work that covers many organizations including enforcement agencies, the judiciary and educational institutions. Because of the work of the Project, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now able to offer internship programmes for its young officers in Geneva and New York. In 2010, eight interns benefited from this Internship program.

This year the International Law Project and indeed the Lao PDR won a major recognition from the UNDP Regional Office. As some of you

might be aware, the UNDP Regional Office selected the International Law Project as a case study to highlight best practice examples for UNDP's successful engagement with human rights systems in South East Asia. In 2010, the Project was also monitored by an European Union independent team. The Project received an excellent report and all these are important statements for the beneficiaries and development partners.

The UNDP very much recognizes and values the generous assistance of the Government of Finland and the European Union to the project. Without their commitment and foresight in supporting the International Law Project these significant achievements for the year would not have been possible. Our development partners have every reason to be proud of the achievements of the Project. The results of the Project's activities have delivered significant benefits in line with the project document to the Lao PDR.

The many successes of the International Law Project in 2010 and indeed in the previous years are good examples and lessons of what can be achieved when development Partners and governments work together within the spirit of the Vientiane Declaration with a common purpose.

This is the second year of this phase of the Project. The achievements have been impressive so far. However I note that most of the Project's work has excluded international trade and commerce. It has also excluded private international law. This is understandable as the

project's work is very focused on human rights. As part of the review, it may be appropriate to consider whether the capacity needs of the Lao PDR dictate that the Project should also look beyond human rights to include international commercial law issues. Given the successes of the Project, we must consider whether we can extend its work to cover other areas of need in international law and indeed the legal sector generally.

I am looking forward to the views of our development partners and to the presentation by the Programme Manager. I have no doubt that they will present important bases for our discussions today.

Thank you

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