

2016 Round Table Implementation Meeting
“Accelerating the implementation of 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan
(8th NSEDP 2016-2020) for LDC graduation and achievement of SDGs”

25th November 2016 - Vientiane Province
RTIM ‘Policy Implementation Dialogue’

Remarks in the Opening Session by Ms. Kaarina Immonen,
UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative

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It is my great honor to be able to offer these remarks to the opening segment of this Round Table Implementation Meeting here in Vientiane Province.

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Following the High Level Round Table Meeting 12 months ago, that witnessed the successful launch of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan; the Vientiane Declaration for Effective Development Cooperation, and; the commencement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Laos, it is only right that we now turn our attention to matters of implementation at this year’s meeting.

Let me first welcome the Government decision of hosting this Round Table Implementation Meeting at a provincial location. Allow me to make special mention of His Excellency Mr. Vidong Sayasone, Governor of Vientiane Province and his team for

extending such a warm welcome to us all, for organising the field visits, for the provincial presentation and the gracious hospitality.

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Over the past two years steps have been taken by the Government to strengthen the Round Table as a mechanism for national development policy dialogue in a number of constructive ways. Better linkage between the Sector Working Groups and the annual Round Table Meeting, and vice versa, is now occurring in most sectors. We acknowledge the hard work over the past year by members of the respective Sector Working Groups, especially the Chairs & Co-chairs as well as their secretariats.

In the run up to this year's Round Table Implementation Meeting, Government consultations with partners have been more extensive than ever before. This is testimony to the commitment of the Government to have a genuinely engaging process as well as it is to the good organization of the Ministry of Planning and Investment.

We have seen the clear benefits from the close collaboration between all Government ministries and development partners, for example, through the formulation of the Country Action Plan for progressing the Vientiane Declaration. The partnership approach has managed to reduce the number of indicators from around 50 to 14, making it more strategic and manageable. Great work – now the real job of implementation lies ahead of us.

Good progress has also been made over the past year, and in particular over the past 2 months through an intensification aimed at advancing the ‘dialogue to action process’ in a number of cross-sectoral Round Table pre-consultations. These have been deliberately focussed on areas critical for Laos to achieve its long-term goal of graduation from Least Developed Country status.

For all partners engaged in the Round Table pre-consultations on ‘Food & Nutrition Security’, the inter-sectoral ‘convergence approach’ represents a real opportunity to accelerate poverty reduction, deliver multiple SDGs and contribute most to the 2030 agenda to ‘leave no one behind’.

For partners engaged in ‘pre-consultations’ covering ‘Green Growth, Climate Change & Disaster Preparedness’ I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government, as the first ASEAN country to have submitted its ratification instruments in respect of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Work needs to continue to strengthen disaster preparedness and response to reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience across all sectors and at all levels.

The UN family in Lao PDR has been keenly supportive of the Government’s leadership at integrating the SDGs into its development planning and statistical frameworks. We applaud the Government as the champion of SDG 18 which, with strong partner support, makes systematic progress in the UXO sector.

The forward looking focus is to further localize the SDGs for real impact on the lives of all Lao people and communities.

In accordance with SDG 17 and the Vientiane Declaration, the development partnership in Laos is evolving and diversifying.

In this regard we note the recent conclusion of the National Assembly 2nd ordinary session and its keen and growing engagement in policy issues of national development. The 360 newly elected members of the Peoples Provincial Assemblies are regarded as important new advocates for implementation of the NSEDP and SDGs at the local level.

Going forward, the permanent engagement of neighbouring and regional partners to these development policy discussions, including within the Sector Working Groups, will become increasingly important. So too will be greater partnership with the private sector and civil society - both national and international.

These stakeholders enrich the quality of the dialogue and bring new perspectives, opportunities and resources to address the many development challenges that still need to be overcome.

In the same way that the Government is striving to create a business and investment environment conducive to inclusive growth, we recommend a more efficient environment is created for civil society as a partner in support of the NSEDP and SDG targets. The inclusive manner in which the private sector and civil

society have been involved in the Round Table pre-consultation meetings this year has proven to be a valuable development.

In reading the well prepared, and concise, 'Background Document' accompanying this Round Table Meeting, we appreciate that the Sector Working Groups have reported on 'follow-up actions' arising from recent Round Table Meetings. In this regard I would like to highlight a few areas where I sense there would be value in consulting further today.

Concerning the importance of Macro-economic stability to the NSEDP, we note that in the context of sustained growth revenue collection and public debt management require particular attention. The Government is encouraged in its commitment to the production of an integrated, transparent and accountable national budget, and alignment of ODA - all of which are essential tools for evidence-based decision making. This can greatly enhance Government & development partner collaboration on planning, coordination and results reporting. We also welcome and support the Government in its implementation of anti-corruption measures.

In the environment sector, whilst the Government has been making strides forward in areas such as illegal logging, other illicit activities are taking place, for example in wildlife, which also necessitates bold steps and measures.

Regarding governance, there is also progress. Given the inextricable link between human rights and development; access to justice, services and information, deserves further attention. It is appreciated that the Government is taking steps to further incorporate international obligations into domestic laws. Equally, we look forward to the completion of the comprehensive action plan following up on the accepted 2nd cycle Universal Periodic Review recommendations through a multi stakeholder forum.

Finally, permit me to take this opportunity on behalf of the United Nations to reinforce our commitment to working with Government and all development partners on what we regard to be a range of mutual development priorities. Our United Nations Partnership Framework, signed earlier this year, in the presence of His Excellency Mr. Somdy Douangdy, Deputy Prime Minister of Lao PDR, and the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon, very much represents our firm statement of intent over the next 5 years.

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Excellencies, since this is a 'Policy Implementation Dialogue' what I look forward to most from the consultations today is just that: An environment within which there is a constructive exchange of views and upon which we can continue to generate consensus, enthusiasm and resources for investment in key action areas in the year ahead.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, I thank you all once again for joining us this morning in Vientiane Province and look forward to the discussions ahead of us.

Best wishes of success, good health and happiness.

Thank you.