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Press Release

The 11th High Level Round Table Meeting 2013, “Accelerating MDG Achievement and Inclusive Development” at National Convention Center, 19 November 2013, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Bringing together more than 400 participants from the Government of Lao PDR and Development Partners as well as the private sector and civil society organization in high-quality policy dialogue, the 11th High Level Round Table Meeting on 19 November focused on ways to deliver on Lao PDR’s development priorities by 2015 while also setting the fundamental path for achieving longer-term goals.

In particular, the High Level Round Table Meeting (HL RTM) highlighted key results of the Mid Term Review of the 7th National Socio Economic Development Plan 2011-2015 (7th NSEDP) and national progress toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For the coming years, it also looked toward the formulation of 8th NSEDP, which covers the period 2016-2020, and the critical aspiration to graduate from Least Developed Country status by 2020.

The HL RTM also highlighted the need for enhancement of the enabling environment for all development goals, as well as reported the progress in governance, public finance management and effective development cooperation. A set of comprehensive Action Plans and Recommendations offered an important “Road map” for the way forward.

The HL RTM, under the theme “Accelerating MDG Achievement and Inclusive Development,” was opened by the Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Thongsing Thammavong, following a keynote address delivered on behalf of H.E. Ms. Helen Clark, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The meeting was then chaired by H.E. Mr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister, and co-chaired by Mr. Haoliang Xu, UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director of the UNDP Bureau for Asia and the Pacific.

At the opening session, the Prime Minister highlighted the successful implementation of 7th NSEDP over a mid term course, which has resulted in strong, continuous economic growth with stability as well as substantial MDG progress. The latter, for example, has including significant poverty reduction from 27.6 percent to 20.5 percent. At the same time, he pointed out a number of remaining challenges, including effectively overcoming the current fiscal challenges and addressing off-track MDGs; persistent impacts from natural disasters; limited capacities of civil servants; and the need for effective law enforcement.

He indicated that to address the mentioned challenges, revenue collection mechanisms would be improved and increased to tackle the deficit, combined with additional attention to good governance and law enforcement. He pledged to provide more attention to social drawbacks and create more

jobs to further reduce poverty, along with focusing on human resource development. Lastly, he said the Government would continue to identify measures to prevent and respond to natural disasters, and to sustain Lao PDR's natural environment.

In this remark, the Prime Minister also took the opportunity to thank DPs for supporting implementation of 7th NSEDP and the MDGs through their technical and financial assistance and expressed the hope that such support would continue for the future.

The UNDP Administrator's keynote address aligned the HL RTM with the "visionary" MDG Summit held in New York in September. She noted that both are resolving to target the most off-track MDGs and to focus on those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged, both now and in the post-2015 development agenda. In Lao PDR, she said, this includes addressing those in remote locations and without access to services, including ethnic groups, women, children and those affected by Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). She particularly welcomed progress by the country in taking an integrated approach to bring food and nutrition security targets on track.

She also emphasized that "getting that balance right between social, economic and environmental dimensions is indeed a challenge." The UNDP Administrator cited concerns about the ability to ensure the funding needed to achieve MDG targets in light of the national budget deficit, and noted Government efforts to limit the deficit through controlling expenditures as well as increasing revenues. She particularly encouraged the growth of the private sector outside of natural resource exploitation as a way to increase budgetary revenues from taxes, and urged more significant progress in improving public finance management in the present constrained financial situation.

Ms. Clark recalled for further actions to strengthen partnerships and create wider space for engagement with civil society. In light of the Busan Partnership, she encouraged the participation of all partners in collectively working towards promoting development effectiveness by urging an early approval of the revised Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (VDCAP) on enhanced development effectiveness. "When we work together," she declared, "anything is possible."

The HL RTM was successfully preceded with good exchange with Development Partners on the national development progress and future directions. The Meeting outcomes are expected to contribute to the formulation of the next five years plan, the country's development agenda beyond the 2015, as well as for the Least Developed Country (LDC) graduation by 2020.

The meeting will be followed by a courtesy visit by a delegation of development partners to H.E. President Choummaly Xayasone on 20th of November to brief him on the results of the meeting. On 20th-21st November, the meeting participants will visit Luang Prabang province to observe development initiatives that are addressing off track Millennium Development Goals. These will include MDG1: Eradicate Extreme poverty and hunger, as well as MDG9: Reduce the impact of UXO, which is a unique MDG for Lao PDR.

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