

Opening statement by Jean-François Cuénod
GSWG chair and co-chair meeting 13 November 2019,
ICTC, Vientiane Capital

1. Express sincere thanks to the co-chairs: the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of Justice, and the UNDP Resident Representative, for organizing the Governance Sector Working Group (GSWG) meeting today. It provide an excellent opportunity for stakeholders to discuss the (1) GSWG's achievements in 2019, (2) the results of the Capacity Needs assessment of the GSWG secretariat and way forward, and (3) the preparations for the Round Table Meeting which will be held in a few weeks.
2. As a Co-Chair of the GSWG, express CH's appreciation of MoHA's efforts in **leading the implementation of the GSWG's annual work plan** for 2019. This year the GSWG work plan has been more aligned with the NSEDP and the SDGs than in previous years. In particular, commend MoHA's initiative in **localizing SDG16** [Peace, justice and strong institutions].
3. Emphasize the importance CH attaches to the **follow-up of comments/recommendations from the last year's RTIM** in the GSWG annual work plan; and of the need for next year's work plan to address the comments/recommendations that are raised at this year's RTM. And to prepare and agree on next year's work plan in a timely manner, as early in 2020 as possible, to allow maximum time for implementation.
4. Congratulate the GSWG secretariat on a number of the thematic SWG and/or SSWG workshops held during 2019. Of particular interest are:
 - i) the thematic workshop on the Ethnicity Decree held on 9 May 2019;

- ii) the thematic workshop on People's feedback to the National Assembly and PPAs, and the roles of various sectors in socio-economic development, held on 26 August 2019; and
 - iii) the thematic workshop on centre-local fiscal relations in Lao PDR on 30-31 October 2019.
5. Important challenges remain with regards to increasing socio-economic inequality and unequal access to public services, especially in remote areas. There is significant scope for GoL ministries and departments to increase the use of data and information in policy-making and decision-making, to better target poor communities, and to further **decentralize financial and administrative functions**, so that local administrations can have increased responsibility for planning, decision-making and implementation in their own local areas.
6. As a Co-Chair of the GSWG, CH observes that overall the GSWG and sub-sector working group (SSWG) on Public Service Improvement are gradually **emerging as a meaningful policy dialogue platform** for governance-related issues. We are pleased that international and national **CSOs are participating** in this dialogue process, alongside representatives from GoL and development partners. Let us hear today the findings and recommendation of the Capacity Needs assessment of the GSWG.
7. On behalf of the Government of Switzerland, I would like to extend my gratitude to my GSWG Co-Chairs for their continued cooperation and partnership. I am looking forward to a fruitful and productive discussion today.

Thank you.