

Meeting of Chairs and Co-Chairs of Sector Working Groups, Sub-Working Groups and other Related Stakeholders

Opening Remarks, UN Resident Coordinator

Monday 28th September (8:30-12:00)
International Cooperation and Training Centre

REMARKS (5 Mins)

Excellency Dr. Kikeo Chanthaboury, Vice Minister of Planning and Investment,

Esteemed partners from line ministries and Government institutions,

Distinguished Ambassadors and development partner representatives,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

- It is an honour to join the Vice-minister in welcoming you to this valuable opportunity to discuss the development priorities of Lao PDR at this important moment in time.
- The 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan is drawing to a close, and we are moving ever closer towards the finalization of the succeeding 9th NSEDP that will set development priorities for the next 5-year period, taking us half-way to 2030 with its ambitious 17 (18) goals achieving a sustainable development for all.
- This is an arduous task under any circumstances, but this year we find ourselves, as if half blindfolded, seeing the drafting of a strategic plan under extremely unusual, and highly uncertain circumstances.
- My co-Chair, his Excellency Dr. Kikeo, has already outlined some of the particular challenges that we face in developing a plan whilst the



whole world grapples with a pandemic. Thankfully, thus far we have avoided major outbreaks in Lao PDR, but the more we learn about the social and economic consequences of COVID-19, the more alarming the situation becomes and the more it can be likened by a malady itself.

- One thing that is very clear already is that the social and economic implications of COVID-19 will not be short-lived. We will need to find ways to cope with the consequences of the pandemic for years to come.
- From a positive point of view, the 9th NSEDP gives us the perfect opportunity to think carefully about how to set the right priorities accompanied by the policies that give the best chance of progress towards our shared development goals despite the demise of COVID-19.
- As part of efforts to think through the strategic implications for the 9th NSEDP, over the past weeks I have had the pleasure of working with a diverse range of stakeholders from Government, development partners, the private sector, trade unions and others under the Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce.
- Many of you, and your institutions, have been involved in this exercise, for which we are most grateful. In particular, I would like to thank those core members of the Taskforce who joined for every session, and my co-chairs for the five Policy dialogues, from:
 1. H.E. Vice Minister Dr. Bounleua Sinxayvoravong, from the Ministry of Finance;
 2. Mr. Oudet Souvannavong, President of the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
 3. H.E. Vice Minister Mme Baykham Khattiya, from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare;



4. Mme. Phonevanh Outhavong from the DOP at the Ministry of Planning and Investment; and
 5. H.E. Vice Minister Dr. Saynakhone Inthavong, from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.
- Through the Taskforce, we looked across sectors and ask questions about what the implications of COVID-19 would be over the coming 5 years, and discussed how strategic policies and priorities would need to be adapted to the changing context in a coherent way. The outcome of these reflections is the strategic advice and recommendations for consideration that we will share with you today.
 - We identified five key inter-sectional themes, as you will have seen in the agenda:
 1. Financing for Sustainable Development and Effective Development Cooperation;
 2. Trade and private sector, value chains and tourism;
 3. Human capital, including health and education: Managing changes and enhancing policy preparedness for decent work; and
 4. Green growth, resilience and risk management.
 - For each of these, a working group consisting of representatives from key national institutions and relevant technical development partners worked to develop background papers to the outcome statements you have in front of you, drawing on existing analysis and suggesting possible ways forward. We then held a high-level policy dialogue under each of the themes, each in which we had a frank, open exchange of views and discussion on key priorities moving forward.



- We will discuss the outcomes of the discussions in more detail shortly, and with today's discussion we will formally bring the work of the Taskforce to a close. But, from the outset, let me say that I have been impressed by the openness with which some of the thorniest development challenges facing Lao PDR were discussed.
- As is the case everywhere, COVID-19 has caused immense disruption, and warrants careful assessment of what will be possible in the coming years. It is by carefully considering the evidence and making the right strategic calls that we stand the best chance of making progress toward our shared development goals in spite of the global pandemic.
- All here today have important roles to play in this process. Opportunities, such as the one today, are therefore crucial in building a shared understanding, aligning our efforts.
- As in previous years, the Round Table will be the centrepiece of our strategic discussions and deliberations on development priorities. As has already been mentioned, the main document to underpin these discussions will be the draft 9th NSEDP. With much implementation work delayed by COVID related restrictions this year and the ongoing preparations ahead of the Party Congress next year, we have agreed to hold the RTM early next year.
- In reaching this decision however, we have been reassured that the RTM indeed will be the final broad based consultation before finalising 9th NSEDP. Nevertheless, and to ensure that this year's review by the Assembly will be as informed as possible I encourage all to use the opportunities over the coming months- including today- to provide feedback and contribute to the further development of the Plan.
- With this, let me thank you all again for your participation, and say that I am very much looking forward to the discussions.



- Thank you very much.

