

## **COVID-19 Recovery Pre-Consultation Meeting**

**Vientiane, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021-** Today, the Ministry of Planning and Investment with the support of the United Nations in Lao PDR held a pre-consultation on the development of a COVID-19 Recovery Plan, in anticipation of the 13<sup>th</sup> High-Level Round Table Meeting, scheduled for 17 November. Taking place every five years, High-Level Round Table Meetings provide an inclusive forum for the Government of Lao PDR, the United Nations and development partners to discuss and support the design and implementation of the country's national development plans and processes.

In 2020, the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the UN convened a Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce to review the impact COVID-19 on national development priorities and make recommendations for how the achievement targets in the draft 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Plan could be recalibrated in light of the impact of the pandemic. This review was centered around five key themes: financing for development; trade, value chains, and tourism; green growth and risk management; the generation of decent work opportunities; and human capital, including issues relating to health and education.

In a continuation of this work, and to adapt to the continuing challenges posed by COVID-19, today's pre-consultation aimed to sensitize decision makers and development partners to COVID-19's health and socio-economic impacts and begin to identify the necessary elements for the formulation of a COVID-19 Recovery Plan in 2022.

Today's pre-consultation was opened by Her Excellency Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment, Madame Phonevanh Outhavong and the United Nations Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR, Ms. Sara Sekkenes. Presentations on the five themes highlighted in 2020 by the Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce were delivered by the Ministries of Finance, of Industry and Commerce, of Labour and Social Welfare, of Planning and Investment, and of Natural Resources and Environment as well as the National Institute for Economic Research.

In her opening remarks, the Deputy Minister highlighted the need to adapt to the 'new normal' of COVID-19, underscoring that the work on the Recovery Plan highlights how far reaching the impact of COVID-19 has been. We must consider all facets in relation to the pandemic, and ensure that our Recovery Plan is inclusive, takes into consideration the most vulnerable of our country and that Leaves No One Behind, she stated. If we are to continue with our ambitious development agenda, dealing with the COVID problem is essential as we look to the implementation of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both in the short term and with longer term development ambitions in sight, such as the graduation from LDC status anticipated in 2026, she said.

The Deputy Minister emphasized the importance of working together with the United Nations and all development partners, noting that only through collaboration can we

develop a robust and efficient COVID-19 recovery plan, and continued by underscoring that the pre-consultation is an important stepping-stone on the road to recovery from the pandemic. The Round Table will further allow us to develop the plan looking forward to 2022, and with sustained effort and an inclusive approach we hope that we can overcome the impacts of the pandemic and get 'back on track'.

In a similar vein, the Resident Coordinator noted that the scale and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on development progress across the world and in Lao PDR, 'warrants exceptional efforts to come together, pool our ideas and understanding, and align efforts to overcome challenges' and in this regard, underlined the importance of the High-Level Round Table Meeting bringing stakeholders together at the highest level and find consensus on the way forward.

The event is part of the preparations for the High-Level Round Table, led by the MPI with the objective to contribute to the NSEDP Implementation towards LDC Graduation, Middle-Income-Country Transition and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and is organised with the generous support through UNDP by the Government of New Zealand Government and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

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