

COVID-19 High-Level Consultation: Towards a COVID-19 Recovery Plan for Lao PDR

Vientiane, 15 November – Today, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, supported by the United Nations in Lao PDR, held a high-level consultation on the development of a COVID-19 Recovery Framework, as a side event to the 13th High Level Round Table Meeting. The meeting was co-chaired by the Deputy Minister for Planning and Investment his excellency Mr. Manothong Vongsay, and Ms. Sara Sekkenes, United Nations Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Government sectors, line ministries and ministry-equivalent organizations, development partners, UN agencies, international non-governmental and civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders.

Opening the meeting, the Deputy Minister underscored the urgency of developing and implementing a comprehensive COVID-19 Recovery Framework that addresses the wide-reaching implications of the pandemic in order for Lao PDR to achieve the development goals of the 9th NSEDP and get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2020, The Ministry of Planning and Investment commissioned a multi-Stakeholder taskforce to formulate recommendations that informed the finalization of the 9th NSEDP on issues affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. One year later, the implications of the pandemic continue to develop, and the multi-stakeholder taskforce was reconvened to update the work and identify areas of particular concern for a rapid recovery in light of the current situation.

The work of the multi-stakeholder taskforce are structured across five key themes: the effects of COVID-19 on financing for sustainable development, on trade and the private sector, value chains and tourism, on employment, on human capital, and finally, on green growth and risk management with respect to environmental and economic shocks and recommendations on how these can be overcome.

The Deputy Minister thanked the United Nations, development partners and the COVID-19 multi-stakeholder taskforce for their support on the process and went on to note that the Recovery Framework is an important document which will guide how we will work together get recover and build back better during the remaining timeframe of the 9th NSEDP till 2025.

The Resident Coordinator echoed the Deputy Minister's sentiments, noting that it will be critical that the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy is well linked and forms a coherent and cohesive set of directions for the country alongside other strategic frameworks that will guide the Lao PDR's development over the next five years, including the 9th NSEDP, the financing strategy for the national plan, the LDC Smooth Transition Strategy, and other National Priority Agendas adding that these should reinforce each other.

Ms. Sekkenes emphasized that for a recovery framework, the re-opening of the country will be an essential component moving forward. These activities not only improve people's health and well-being, but also contribute towards the re-initiation of learning among children, with the opening of schools, a return to meaningful livelihoods and gainful employment and the revival of businesses, the economy, and the opportunity to again start planning for the investments needed today to secure critical development progress tomorrow, she noted.

Occurring every five years, High Level Round Table Meetings function as 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.