

The 13th High Level Roundtable Meeting in Lao PDR

Vientiane, 17 November 2021 – Today, the Government of Lao PDR together with its development partners among member states, international organisations as well as representatives from civil society and the private sector gathered virtually for the 13th High-Level Round Table Meeting ***under the theme: “enhancing partnership to improve the effective implementation of the 9th five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan aiming to accelerate the country’s achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and graduation from the Least Developed Country status in the mid of COVID-19 recovery.”***

The Round Table is an inclusive forum for discussing and exchanging views on the implementation progress of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan in each period of time between the Government and development partners. The meeting was officially opened with an opening remarks from H.E. Mr. Phankham Viphavanh, Prime Minister of Lao PDR, and Mr. Achim Steiner, Vice-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, UNDP Administrator, also shared his pre-recorded comments from New York by emphasizing that “The 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan presents an opportunity for Lao PDR to pursue a smooth graduation”, whilst stressing that “a strategy to ‘build forward better’ from COVID-19 should be an integral part of this plan. That is crucial given that the pandemic has deepened existing inequalities, with the most vulnerable bearing the brunt of the impact.” He concluded his address noting that “development is no longer a one-way transfer of funds or expertise. Rather, it is centred on the principle of “co-creating” and “co-investing” in solutions.” And that “In that spirit, the entire United Nations family will be on hand to support Lao PDR in its pursuit of the 2030 Agenda.”

After the opening session, H.E. Mr. Sonexay Siphandone, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Planning and Investment, chaired the meeting together with his co-chair, UN Resident Coordinator to the Lao PDR, Ms. Sara Sekkenes.

The 13th Roundtable consisted of a variety of [side events and consultations](#) and finished with today’s High-Level Meeting. The meeting comes at an important moment for Lao PDR as the country enters its first year of the implementation of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and is beginning the preparatory period for graduation from the Least Developed Country status, amid the period when Lao PDR as well as countries worldwide are suffering from impacts derived from the COVID-19 pandemic. The issues were, therefore, the discussion core in this meeting. Simultaneously, the meeting also reviewed Lao PDR’s progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals through a presentation of the 2nd Voluntary National Review and a mid-term review of the Country Action Plan of the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2015-2025)

In his official opening remarks for the High-Level Round Table Meeting, His Excellency Mr. Phankham Viphavanh, Prime Minister of Lao PDR, noted that “This

year's High Level Roundtable Meeting is a result of a joint effort between the Government of the Lao PDR and its Development Partners who have engaged in discussions and consultations on the development issues of the Lao PDR. Accordingly, I hope to see commitments made by both domestic and international development partners with regard to the support of the socio-economic development of the Lao PDR, particularly the implementation of the national agenda 2021-2023 on the economic and financial remediation as well as the fight against drug trafficking; the implementation of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan; the graduation from Least Developed Countries status by 2026 and the achievement of goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." **He further addressed that "the Government will continue to pay close attention on preventing, controlling and containing the COVID-19 pandemic. Lao PDR aims to inoculate 50% of its population within 2021 and would like to urge development partners to continue providing more vaccines to help combating the outbreak]**

UN Resident Coordinator, Ms Sara Sekkenes, underlined that the High-Level Round Table offers a unique opportunity for discussions and exchanges that ensure the pursuit of people-centred development. Government of Lao PDR and development partners gathered today to thoroughly 'take stock' of past achievements and lessons learnt, 'look forward' and discuss issues relevant to national planning, and 'think about how' by reviewing development cooperation and coordination with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of our work for the benefit of our beneficiaries and leaving no one behind.

Ms. Sara Sekkenes further emphasized that with a clear commitment to, and conviction that comprehensive and sustainable development requires multilateral cooperation across sectors, the UN system looks to development partners and Government counterparts to join this whole-of-system approach, introduced by the reform of the UN Development System in 2018, Ms Sekkenes emphasised.

Ms Sekkenes went on to note that this year's Round Table and technical level side events represent the most recent steps in long standing processes and the product of a strong commitment by the Government of Lao PDR, and other development partners, working together to identify key issues for the implementation of the 9th NSEDP and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a challenging time.

As chair of the event, H.E. Dr. Sonexay Siphandone, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Investment, noted that to ensure that the results of the 13th High-Level Round Table Meeting are implemented with maximum effectiveness, I would like to encourage all relevant line ministries, provincial authorities, development partners, international organizations, the private sector and civil society organizations to continue their close consultation and coordination in contributing to the successful and effective implementation of the 9th National Socio-Economic

Development Plan (2021-2025), thereby laying strong foundations for the remediation of impacts from COVID-19, the preparation for the graduation of LDC Status and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. I would like to emphasize the importance of intensifying our efforts in improving coordination and management mechanism for ODA projects and programmes through the Roundtable Process (RTP), the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) in accordance with the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan (VDCAP) to ensure their alignment with the sector strategies and ensure that the impacts are felt all the way to the local levels, and he stated in his closing remarks that: On this auspicious occasion, on behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR and the Lao People, I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to all Development Partners, International Organizations, International Financial Institutions, Civil Society Organizations and the private sector who have provided their financial as well as technical assistance to the socio-economic development of the Lao PDR. I sincerely hope that you will continue to provide your support to the improvement of livelihoods of the Lao People, especially those who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which the Government and Development Partners consider the utmost priority alongside the implementation of the National and International Development Agenda]

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