

2022 Sensitization Meeting for Non-Resident Development Partners

Meeting Minutes

Date and time: 18th November, 2022, 10:30 hrs -12:00 hr.

Via: Video Conference by *ZOOM*



The 2022 Sensitization Meeting for Non-Resident Development Partners was Chaired by the H.E. Mme. Phonevanh Outhavong, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Co-Chair, Ms. Sara Sekkenes, UN Resident Coordinator.

The objective of the meeting was to brief non-resident DPs on the preparations for the 2022 Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM)

1. Background

The RoundTable is an inclusive forum for discussing and exchanging views on the implementation progress of the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) between the Government and development partners. Taking place every five years, High-Level Round Table Meetings (HL-RTMs) guide the design and implementation of the country's NSEDs. Round Table Implementation Meetings (RTIMs) are held every year to take stock of progress made in the past year and set joint priorities for the coming year.^[1] The process includes 10 Sector Working Groups (SWGs), brought together under a chairs and co-chairs structure (national leads and international support to the leads).

2. Objective

The meeting of the sensitization for non -resident development partners aimed provide updates of the preparation process of the 2022 Round Table Implementation Meeting and to exchange ideas and advice to improve the preparation process. The participants of the meeting included

ambassadors and high-level representatives of embassies based in Vietnam and Thailand that are accredited to Lao PDR.

Opening Remarks were delivered by H.E. Mme. Phonevanh Outhavong, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Planning and Investment.

H.E Mme Phonevanh stated that this session would provide an opportunity for the Department of International Cooperation/Ministry of Planning and Investment to update in more detail on the preparations for 2022 RTIM and key issues that will be tabled and discussed at the RTIM with regards to, amongst others, development cooperation. H.E Mme Phonevanh noted evidence of the impacts of COVID-19 and natural disasters on the socio-economic situation in the country, and that prices for basic needs like food, fuel, and fertilizers have rapidly increased; these would make this year and the remaining years toward the end of the 9th NSEDP more challenging.

She stressed that the fundamentals required for the achievement of the SDGs and LDC graduation are related to political stability, peace, favorable conditions for development, human resource development such as education, developing skills, and quality services and products through encouraging domestic investments such as SMEs.

Delivering on these would require strong engagement from all development partners, including active participation in the Round Table process and its SWGs. Continued support from all development partners would certainly enhance the Government's efforts to achieve national development goals including SDGs, the green growth agenda, and graduation from the LDC status by 2026. H.E Mme Phonevanh welcomed fruitful and constructive discussion in order to enrich partnership and development cooperation through this meeting.

Remarks from Ms. Sara Sekkenes, UN Resident Coordinator.

Ms. Sara Sekkenes, as co-Chair of the meeting welcomed all participants including 14 recently-accredited ambassadors based in Vietnam and Thailand, and expressed gratitude to them for taking the time to join the meeting. She informed all those new of the role and function of the UN Resident Coordinator, since 2018 at the decision of member states, an independent function – (as opposed to the previous model contained within UNDP) – to represent the UN Development system in country vis-à-vis the host country authorities and thereby lead the UNCT as a whole. With this mandate, and with operational assistance by UNDP, the RC co-chairs with the host government, the forum for development cooperation, the Round Table Process with its associated Sector Working Groups and annual Round Table Meetings.

Ms. Sekkenes stated that the challenges coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing crisis on fuel, energy, and finance are leading to severe consequences such as food insecurity, reduced access to health services and medicines as well the limited economic opportunity for people in Lao PDR.

She briefly reported on the work underway to support the implementation of the 9th NSEDP. This included work on developing a Financing Strategy which has largely been completed with well consulted strategy focused on making the best possible use of all potential development resources. Work on developing a Resilience Framework to both respond to current challenges and strengthen resilience to future shocks is also close to finalization. The country is preparing for the LDC graduation transition process through the ongoing development of a Smooth Transition Strategy, with the aim of ensuring that there would not be disruption in the development trajectory but rather increase the development progress following graduation.

Thus, the close coordination and collaboration between the Lao Government and all development partners, both resident and non-resident, is essential. The annual Round Table meeting taking place in January 2023 is an important platform for discussing development progress and how to strengthen engagement with development partners.

This was followed by a technical presentation:

The Department of International Cooperation/Ministry of Planning and Investment under the leadership of Mr. Sysomphorn Phetdaoheuang, Deputy Director General delivered the key presentation on the process and timelines of activities that led to the 2022 RTIM. The concept note of 2022 RTIM with the six specific objectives of RTIM were presented. The tentative agenda for the 2022 RTIM was shared during the presentation.

Questions and discussion summary

There were no specific questions during the discussion session.

The participants expressed acknowledgment and gratitude for the informative briefing and useful remarks from the Chair and Co-Chair

Remarks

Ms. Sara expressed her thanks for the opportunity to of this remote briefing session in preparation for the RTIM. She emphasized that for all of the main agenda items on development effectiveness, financing for development, reliance, and achieving a smooth transition from LDC graduation, a strong corporation with all of development partners is essential in the months and years ahead. She looks forward for a constructive engagement in the RTIM in this coming January.

Closing Remarks

H.E. Mme Phonevanh expressed her gratitude to Ms. Sara for the useful remarks and sincere thanks to all participants. Based on feedback, it is taken that the information of the preparation status of the upcoming RTIM provided during this brief session was sufficient. However, more suggestions and advice would be gratefully received to further strengthen the RTIM process and SWGs.

She hopes to meet with all non-resident development partners in person in 2023 as part of a joint mission with the UN Resident Coordinator to Vietnam and Thailand.

Lastly, she emphasized the importance of RTIM as the main platform to share challenges and how Lao Government has progressed the implementation of the development agenda. Simultaneously, this platform provides an opportunity for collaboration, exchanging suggestions, and advice.

Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda

Annex 2: Presentation of Concept Note for the 2022 RTIM