

SWG Chair & Co-Chair Meeting

Thursday, 9 October 2025, 09:00–12:00, Holiday Inn & Suites

Remarks by Bakhodir Burkhanov, UN Resident Coordinator

- *Excellency Mr. Soulivath Souvannachoumksam, Deputy Minister of Finance*
- *Chairs and Co-Chairs of Sector Working Groups*
- *Development partners, United Nations Country Team*
- *Ladies and gentlemen:*

It is a pleasure to join Deputy Minister in welcoming you all to this discussion. The 14th High-Level Round Table Meeting is central to our agenda this morning. With a little over a month to go, I am pleased that there is broader representation in the room today, as we move into higher gear in our preparations for a successful Round Table Meeting. I would like to thank the Deputy Minister and the RTP Secretariat in the International Finance and Cooperation Department for continued leadership. I would also like to acknowledge the Government of New Zealand for financial support to the National Planning for Inclusive Development (NPFID) project of UNDP, which supports the implementation of activities leading up to the RTIM.

Today's agenda reflects three substantive items that are both inter-related and also converge on the High-Level Round Table Meeting in November. These are the draft 10th NSEDP, a pre-consultation engagement leading up to the RTIM, and the 3rd Vientiane Declaration. Allow me to share some reflections on these topics:

First, the drafting of the **10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan** has been an important iterative process, with the fifth draft being presented today. From the findings and recommendations from the mid-term review of the 9th NSEDP to several rounds of comments and suggestions made by SWG chairs and co-chairs, development partners and UN agencies – we look forward to a draft that incorporates feedback, with the aim to further the vision of the 10th Plan – i.e. to develop a resilient, self-reliant and sustainable Lao PDR.

Second, there has been encouraging progress on the **M&E Matrix** for the 10th Plan. The UN Country Team, particularly through the inter-agency Learning, Evaluation and Data Group (LEAD), has provided technical support in that regard. A technical workshop was held just earlier this week. I encourage SWGs to give feedback to the M&E framework, which is critical for implementing the Plan and measuring its impact. One part of the equation is strengthening the use of results-based indicators; the other is about access to information and transparency. In this regard, UNDP is supporting the Ministry of Finance on an M&E dashboard to monitor NSEDP progress. This is critical, as in the last mid-term review of the 9th Plan, data was available for only 10% of the NSEDP indicators.

Third, the 10th Plan will begin the year Lao PDR is set to graduate from Least Developed Country status. The Plan must align with the Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC graduation, so that implications of the transition dovetail with the implementation of the NSEDP. This, together with the impacts of shrinking ODA, requires that the plan be well-resourced with a robust **Financing Strategy**. Preliminary estimates suggest that the financing gap for the 10th Plan could range between 8 and 11 billion US Dollars. This highlights the urgent need to look beyond ODA and to secure a broader mix of financing – public and private, domestic and international.

Fourth, the **Round Table Process** needs to evolve to support this broader financing agenda. The recent ministerial restructuring and the formulation of the 10th Plan give us a timely opportunity to rethink how the RTP can better support national development priorities. Institutional mandates of Sector Working Groups could better align with the NSEDP, and critical issues such as energy, technology and social protection should not fall through the cracks. Thought should be given to RTP's links with the overall management of development financing beyond ODA, including the work of the National Committee on NSEDP financing, the PFM Committee, and coordination with the private sector, including Lao Business Forum. The UN is drafting a policy paper on RTP sustainability, and we will hear from UNDP on this later.

And fifth, the **3rd Vientiane Declaration** is slated for endorsement at the Round Table Meeting on 19 November. I am grateful to Deputy Minister for making the time to open the VDCAP III consultation at UN House last week, and to DDG Kouthong for the briefing to development partners. Several partners have already provided feedback, and the consultation gave us an opportunity to raise practical questions regarding sign-off timelines. I will not repeat what we discussed last week, but just want to say that the successful realization of the Vientiane Declaration goes hand-in-hand with efficiency of its implementation mechanism. And this brings us back to the Round Table Process as the guiding framework, and Sector Working Groups as implementation vehicles.

Dear friends and colleagues:

The past two Round Table Meetings were successful in identifying challenges and bringing us all together to deliberate response. You have all played a role in that success, so we can set our aims higher this time around. The upcoming High-Level RTIM can afford to be more forward-looking, focused on opportunities and solutions for investing in development. Together with the Ministry of Finance, we have committed to holding a **pre-consultation event** later this month, and it can begin to tackle those opportunities for investing in growth, jobs, youth and digital transformation, while maintaining the overall themes of Human Capital Development and Macroeconomic/Environmental policies. We envision this pre-consultation as a half-day event with a panel discussion followed by interactive dialogue. One idea is to invite speakers from recently graduated countries such as the Maldives or Bhutan to join us online. The event could also engage the private sector, with a view to adding a business dimension to the High-Level Round Table Meeting. We will hear a presentation on the proposed agenda for this pre-consultation, tentatively scheduled for 22 October. And we would like to hear your ideas on how SWGs and individual partners can lead and support the preparations.

There is another milestone in the lead up to the High-Level RTIM on 19 November. In early November, a **pre-session National Assembly dialogue** will bring together NA Members to discuss policy issues of national importance related to the formulation, financing, implementation and monitoring of the new NSEDP. This policy dialogue comes at an important juncture as we enter the final phase of the 10th Plan formulation. The intention is to deliver the policy dialogue in advance of the 9th Regular Session of the National Assembly, and engage NA members on crucial issues such as prioritization, financing strategies and oversight mechanisms. We welcome development partners to join us in co-delivering the sessions.

I thank Deputy Minister Soulivath for his commitment to this dialogue and for his substantive steer on key topics on our agenda today. And a big thank-you to all national and international partners for being here today in what promises to be a good exchange and discussion.