



UNITED NATIONS
LAO PDR



Date: 25 July 2025

Minutes of Meeting

Project Information: National Planning and Financing for Inclusive Development (NPFID) project, 00134240

Subject: 2025 Sector Working Groups Chair and Co-Chair Meeting

Date: 18 July 2025, at the Holiday Inn Vientiane

Participants:

Attached.

Prepared by:

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Reviewed and approved by:


Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM

Date:.....

Date:.....

Name: H.E.Mr. Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM
Title: Deputy Minister of Finance

Name: Mr. Bakhodir BURKHANOV
Title: UN Resident Coordinator, Lao PDR

On 18 July 2025, at the Holiday Inn & Suites Vientiane, the Department of International Financial Cooperation of the Ministry of Finance alongside UNDP Lao PDR organized the 2025 Sector Working Groups -Chair & Co-Chair meeting in preparation for the 14th High-Level Round Table Meeting 2025 (HL-RTM). The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr. Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM, Deputy Minister of Finance and co-chaired by Mr. Bakhodir BURKHANOV, UN Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR. In total, 87 participants attended, including 27 women, representing Chairs and Co-chairs of 10 Sector Working Groups from various line ministries and development partners.

This meeting is the second event in the 2025 Round Table Process (RTP), which serves as a platform for facilitating discussions and consultations on the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) contributions to the formulation of the 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). The participants were given updates on the formulation of 10th NSEDP Financing Strategy, 4th draft of the 10th NSEDP and the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework and the update on the next steps. Furthermore, the participants were able to view the updated concept note and agenda for the 14th HL-RTM tentatively scheduled for the last week of November 2025 and the forthcoming pre-consultation events leading up to the HL-RTM.

H.E. Mr. Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM, Deputy Minister of Finance, first thanked the SWGs for the feedback given on the 4th draft for the 10th NSEDP and the first concept note for the 2025 HL-RTM, emphasizing the vital role of SWGs in these processes. He discussed the purpose of this meeting which is to provide update to the development partners on the formulation of the 10th NSEDP and the ongoing preparations coming up to the 14th HL-RTM. He cemented that in spite of the newly emerging economic challenges being face by the government of Lao PDR, they remain committed to achieving the goals outlined in the NSEDPs. He additionally provided an important update on the restructuring of the government and consolidation of ministries, reminding the SWGs that this would affect Chairing arrangements. The Department of International Finance and Cooperation (IFCD/DIFC), under the Ministry of Finance (MOF), would be taking over the RTP Secretariat on coordination process. Finally, he provided an update to participants on two forthcoming events, one concerning Global Partnership Monitoring (GPEDC) and the training for SWGs on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI).

Mr. Bakhodir BURKHANOV, Co-Chair and the UN Resident Coordinator began by welcoming H.E. Mr. Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM to his new role at the consolidated Ministry of Finance as an instrumental player in organizing the RTP. He echoed the Deputy Minister Soulivath's gratitude towards the SWGs contributions and emphasized feedback that the 10th NSEDP needs to be aligned with financing strategies. The Co-Chair additionally noted the importance of dialogues and inclusion in the approaching HL-RTM especially as Lao PDR approaches LDC graduation in 2026. The Co-Chair noted the changes in UN structuring to make work more effective and streamlined in Lao PDR, particularly in light of the newly presented global economic shifts creating challenges in global trade and shrinking Official Development Assistance (ODA).

For full remarks: [Opening Remarks at SWG Chairs and Co-chairs Meeting | United Nations in Lao PDR](#)

I. Objective

The objective of the 2025 SWGs Chair and Co-Chair Meeting was to provide an update on the formulation of the 10th NSEDP, its Financing Strategy and the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) framework, which incorporating feedback from development partners, and the preparation for the 14th HL-RTM.

II. Presentations

Three Presentations were delivered. The first from the Department from Planning (DOP), which provided updates on the 4th draft of the 10th NSEDP, feedback comments from development partners, and the formulation of 10th NSEDP Financing Strategy. The second presentation was given by UN LEAD group from UNICEF on the reviewed of the M&E framework and provided recommendations to help better aligns with the NSEDP context, while still adhering to international indicators. The final presentation was delivered by the International Finance and Cooperation Department (IFCD) on the concept note and agenda for the 14th HL-RTM schedule to be held in November, in addition to series of pre-consultations events leading up to it.

III. Discussion

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB congratulated the MOF on their progress in creating the 4th draft of the 10th NSEDP, particularly regarding their thorough incorporation of comments made by ADB related to trade facilitation and investment promotion. They additionally emphasized the role of the NSEDP as a platform for building consensus on key reforms and tracking progress in this regard. They made 10 additional suggestions for consideration to help strengthen the 10th NSEDP. The suggestions are as follows; (1) greater clarity on domestic resource mobilization strategies, particularly looking at tax reform and anti-avoidance measures, (2) expansion of debt management frameworks to better incorporate potential for restructuring, and measures ensuring transparency and accountability, (3) further details regarding medium-term expenditure frameworks to improve procurement efficiency, (4) clarification for the goals in fostering public-private partnerships to ensure better execution of vision in this area by all parties involved, (5) strengthening of tools cultivating resiliency in the financial sector, (6) greater transparency in regard to tariff implementation to maintain trade commitments and keep domestic prices low for essentials such as food, (7) solidification of energy sector reform goals , especially in regard to the Electricité du Laos (EDL), (8) clearer targets for State-owned Enterprises (SOE) reform, (9) improved integration of climate disaster data across all outcomes listed in the 10th NSEDP to strengthen climate resilience across the board, and (10) clearer climate-related targets across the 10th NSEDP to expand adaptation efforts and align budgets.

European Union (EU)

The representative from the European Union congratulated the Chair on the new growth target and recognized the strong leadership demonstrated by the Lao government in the Vientiane Declaration and throughout the RTP. They then requested that an early draft of the 10th NSEDP is submitted to ensure collaboration between the partners and recommended greater involvement of the private sector. They additionally recommended greater investments in human capital development as these areas remain underfunded. At this time, the representative informed partners that the EU is unable to disclose figures on its financial commitments at this time, as their financial planning cycle has started and it is currently underway for 2028. The representative additionally noted that the restructuring of the ministries represents an opportunity to rethink the approach to SWGs to be more comprehensive, with a suggestion to potentially include a Social Protections SWG to reflect donor interest.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

The representative from UNICEF advocated to move Food Security and Nutrition from Outcome 3, which focuses on the agricultural sector to Outcome 2, to reflect the goal for human resource development in the 10th NSEDP and have provided three justifications. The first justification relates to the indicators under Outcome 2, such as life expectancy, mortality rates, fertility rates, etc. which are closely linked to nutrition levels. The second reason is due to resource allocation to the Ministry of Health as a key contributor to national nutrition, which has been covered in Outcome 2 and

would be significant to cultivating food security. The final reason advocated by UNICEF was to have Food Security transitioned to Outcome 2, as nutrition is a cross-cutting topic, but more significant to socio-cultural factors than socio-economic ones, which are better encompassed in Outcome 2. Overall, nutrition reporting requires a wide range of data and budget tracking at a wide variety of factors as the issue is multi-dimensional.

Embassy of the United States of America

The representative cemented their commitment as Co-Chair of two SWGs, the Trade and Private Sector SWG and the UXO SWG, and assured that reports with feedback for the 4th draft of the 10th NSEDP will be delivered promptly from these SWGs allowing the government to incorporate the comments. The representative additionally affirmed their commitment to building local capacity in the UXO sector and developing financial resiliency considering ongoing international economic challenges by helping strengthen financial frameworks to attract investment.

Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

The representative recalled a suggestion from previous iterations of this meeting that Chairs and Co-Chairs in the SWGs could rotate and was hoping it could be explored further in the future. The representative stated their appreciation of the incorporation of their previous comments relating to the strengthening of the Health chapter in the 10th NSEDP and reiterated Luxembourg's continued commitment to ongoing consultation. Luxembourg additionally reiterated their support to the Green Financing initiatives in Lao PDR in collaboration with government and the UN through a joint programme. Finally, the representative reaffirmed their commitment as Co-Chair of the Rural Development SWG and highlighted the need for inclusivity of all relevant partners in the 14th HL-RTM in addition to themselves.

Embassy of Germany

The representative thanked the government of Lao PDR for their hospitality and welcoming of the German Embassy in the country and reiterated their commitment to co-chairing the Natural Resource Management SWG. They additionally noted that the restructuring of the government ministries may help to create greater efficiency for the SWGs, and they are prepared to make contributions considering this change. Finally, the representative echoed the comments made by the representative from the Embassy of Luxembourg on the potential of Green and Sustainable Financing in Lao PDR and their readiness to support these initiatives.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The representative offered two reflections in light of the organization's ongoing involvement in formulating the 10th NSEDP, the Financing Strategy, RTP, and the 10-year National Socio-Economic Development Strategy (NSEDS). In the first reflection, the representative highlighted the need for alignment between the 10-year NSEDS and the 5-year NSEDP, as well as between the Financing Strategy and the 10-year NSEDS's ambitious goal of achieving 5.5% annual GDP growth by 2030. Achieving 5.5% annual GDP growth will require substantial investments and enhanced resource mobilization, which the Financing Strategy needs to address. The second reflection focused on lessons learned from neighboring countries in areas such as State-owned Enterprises reform, natural resource taxation, and related sectors. The representative also reiterated UNDP's readiness to support Lao PDR in implementing these reforms to help achieve its development goals through the 10th NSEDP.

World Bank (WB)

The representative congratulated government representatives on the comprehensive nature of the 10th NSEDP process and the thorough incorporation of comments made by development partners. As Co-Chair of the Macroeconomic SWG alongside ADB, the World Bank representative affirmed their support to ADB's earlier suggestions. The representative expressed their support for the 10th NSEDP process and affirmed their support to its implementation once finalized. This will be accomplished through the World Bank's new Country Partnership Framework, which will be formulated after the finalized 10th NSEDP to ensure its alignment to the plan, particularly in the area of financing.

Embassy of Japan

The representative began by welcoming the new Director General from the IFCD and stated their wish to continue the good relationship between the Japanese Embassy and the department. The representative congratulated the government on its significant recovery of the Lao economy since the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the tourism sector and the designation of Hin Nam No as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Additionally, the representative commended the government for reconvening the RTP and HL-RTM since the last was held online 5 years ago. However, the representative additionally noted potential limitations in the embassy's involvement of the RTP, as the 70th anniversary of the Japanese-Lao alliance approaches, the embassy will be occupied with arranging the visit of a member from the Japanese Imperial House in November. The representative ended by stating they are currently working on amending their Aid Policy Paper for Lao PDR aligning it with the 10th NSEDP and the emerging needs of Lao PDR.

International Finance and Cooperation Department (IFCD), Ministry of Finance

The IFCD expressed their appreciation for the fruitful feedback and discussion on the 4th draft of the 10th NSEDP and confirmed that the details on the new Vientiane Declaration and financing strategy would be shared at the upcoming 14th HL-RTM. To prepare for the upcoming HL-RTM and the finalization of the 10th NSEDP, the representative urged SWGs to consolidate their feedback. The representative highlighted that upcoming events leading up to the HL-RTM are key opportunities for development partners to discuss priorities and encouraged SWG chairs and co-chairs to organize meetings. The representative, who had previously attended a UXO sector meeting, confirmed their continued participation in future SWG meetings. They also requested that each SWG submit their implementation reports to the SWG Secretariats in accordance with the Secretariat's work plan.

Department of Planning (DOP), Ministry of Finance

The representative acknowledged that the feedback provided throughout the discussion have been valuable to the ongoing process of finalizing the 10th NSEDP. They then responded to UNICEF's feedback regarding the recommendation to move Food Security to Outcome 2. They reaffirmed their openness to further discuss this but ensured UNICEF that these goals were intentionally added under Outcome 3 because food security and nutrition are closely intertwined and measurable as indicators of human development. The representative went on to discuss the alignment of the 10th NSEDP with the 10-year National Socio-Economic Development Strategy (NSEDS), and updated participants that this is something the department is working on. In particular, DOP are currently assessing the financing required to achieve the new annual economic goal of 5.5% GDP growth.

Other Matters Discussed

Participants from the European Union, Embassy of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and the Embassy of the United States, expressed their support for good governance practices, citing concerns regarding the prevalence of money laundering and cybercrimes in the Golden Triangle. They emphasized that this is an opportunity for the government to show strong political commitment by

supporting legal institutions upholding international legal frameworks against illicit activities. Subsequently, such actions would additionally help create an inviting environment for international investment.

In response, the Chair and representatives from the Ministry of Finance emphasized the need for technical assistance from the development partners in this area to demonstrate government effectiveness and attract investments. Representatives from the US Embassy offered support in implementing the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations to allow Lao PDR to graduate from the “Gray List” by improving anti-money laundering controls. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), additionally offered their support for implementing anti-money laundering controls anti-drug trafficking measures as it stands a core part of their mandate. UNODC also offered additional information or assistance to interested parties on cybercrimes and stated their readiness to take on a co-chairing role for related issues and sharing relevant resources for the implementation as part of their technical assistance.

IV. Conclusion

The Co-Chair provided concluding remarks, thanking participants for their comprehensive discussion on the 4th draft of the 10th NSEDP. He highlighted key updates on the progress of 10th NSEDP, and its M&E framework, and secondly on the RTP, and the function of the RTM. He echoed comments made by SWGs and DPs on areas such as LDC Graduation objectives, climate agricultural resilient, regional and economic connectivity, tax reform and resource mobilization. MOF has taken into account all the comments will incorporated into the 5th draft of the 10th NSEDP, which will be presented at the SWGs in September ahead of the approval of the 10th NSEDP in 2026. He echoed the importance of the complementary Financing Strategy to ensure that it is high-quality and in line with International National Financing Framework (INFF). He called for additional feedback to contribution to the finalization of the Financing Strategy in 2025. He encouraged partners to give feedback on the M&E frameworks and emphasized the importance of having a measurable 10th NSEDP. He echoed remarks on contemporizing SWGs to reflect the changes in government ministries and incorporating missing sectors such as social protections to ensure that the RTP is comprehensive. Finally, he reminded partners that these works require timely comments and expressed the appreciation for their contributions, although their planning cycles may not fully align with the 14th HL-RTM timeline.

The Chair ended the meeting by reminding the SWGs to promptly share their reports to allow for amendments as the 14th HL-RTM approaches, he emphasized to participants the urgency to complete the necessary tasks to prepare for the rapidly approaching 14th HL-RTM. He again thanked the SWGs and partners for their thorough feedback and noted that discussion throughout the meeting were well received and will be used to incorporated into developments of the 10th NSEDP and RTP. In his concluding remark, he made two key requests: 1) all participants, from both the government and development partners, should submit any outstanding feedback to the SWGs Secretariat and 2) all SWGs should organize their meetings and submit progress reports to ensure timely preparatory of activities leading up to the 14th HL-RTM. Finally, he thanked all participants for their attendance and officially closed the meeting.

Annex 1 - Agenda

08.30 – 09.00	Registration
09.00 – 09.05	Master Ceremony <i>Mr. Santi SONGAVONG, Director of IOD, IFCD/ Ministry of Finance</i>
09.00 – 09.10	Opening remarks <i>H.E Mr. Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance</i>
09:10 – 09.20	Remarks <i>Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, UN Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR</i>
09.20 – 10:00	<p>Session 1: 10th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026 – 2030) formulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the Audit trail of Comments from Sector Working Groups and Development partners, demonstrating how comments received during the last rounds of consultation have been addressed in the 4th version of the NSEDP • Update on the formulation of the 10th NSEDP Financing Strategy • Next steps on finalizing the 10th NSEDP <p><i>Mr. Kalouna NUNTHAVONGDUANGSY, Deputy Director General of DoP/ Ministry of Finance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations to improve the format and logic of the M&E Framework <p><i>Mr. Simone Buosi, UN LEAD Co-chair, Planning and Monitoring Specialist, UNICEF</i></p>
10:00 -10.30	Partners' reflections and feedback
10:30 – 11:45	Group Photo and Coffee Break
11:45 – 11:00	<p>Session 2: High-level Round Table Meeting Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the updated concept note and agenda • Presentation of the calendar of events leading up to the High-Level Round Table Meeting, and the role of SWGs <p><i>Mr. Vongkhamheng VONGTHACHACK, Director General of IFCD/ Ministry of Finance</i></p>
11:00 – 11:45	Discussion
11:45 – 11:55	Recap <i>Mr. Bakhodir BURKHANOV, UN Resident Coordinator to Lao PDR</i>
11:55 – 12:00	Closing remarks <i>H.E Mr. Soulivath SOUVANNACHOUMKHAM, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Finance</i>
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch

Annex 2: List of Participants