



CONCEPT NOTE

FOUREENTH HIGH-LEVEL ROUND TABLE MEETING - 2025

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Background

Lao PDR's growth vision has been centered on becoming the "battery of ASEAN" and becoming "land-linked". Impressive growth rates have been achieved for two decades. Poverty (based on national poverty rates) declined significantly from 33.5 percent in 2002-2003 to 23.2 percent in 2012-2013 and further to 18.6 percent in 2018-2019. Significant gains were made in human development, between 1990 and 2022; Lao PDR's HDI value increased by 52.0 percent representing significant progress in life expectancy, mean and expected years of schooling, and GNI per capita. Sustained socio-economic progress enabled Lao PDR to meet the criteria for graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status; the country is expected to graduate in 2026. However, progress, while significant and impressive, also masks underlying structural vulnerabilities which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic volatility that has persisted in the global economy ever since.

The Government of Lao PDR is finalizing the formulation of its Tenth Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for the period 2026-2030, which coincides with the country's scheduled graduation from Least Developed Country status in November 2026 and the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Government is updating its Nationally determined contribution to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (NDC 3.0).

In this context and taking into account the recommendations from the mid-term review of the 9th NSEDP, the Five-Year Development Plan has to address strategic policy issues linked to ensuring a smooth transition from LDC status while stabilizing domestic macro-economic pressures. The mid-term review made the case that the development trajectory can only be identified and implemented if macro-economic stability can be assured and that there is a realistic expectation

that funding for human capital investment will become available, even if only incrementally, as the economy strengthens. Furthermore, the review highlighted that economic transformation requires a shift from relying on growth which is capital-intensive, resource-driven, accelerated by large foreign investments in hydropower, mining, and construction to growth which provides informal, but most importantly, formal, long-term job opportunities – essentially job-rich growth. The review further identified the need for protecting and expanding investments in human development as government revenue performance improves. In an era of growing policy uncertainty and turbulence in the global and regional development landscape, it is further proposed that the Five-Year Development Plan looks at building resilience against external shocks and mega trends including climate shocks, geo-political tensions, technological revolution and demographic shifts.

The Government of Lao PDR considers the Round Table Process and Round Table Meetings as the most representative forum to shape policies and set directions for accelerating the country’s development. Lao PDR’s national aid architecture is defined by the RoundTable Process (RTP) which is composed of annual round table meetings and sector working groups (SWGs). The round table meetings and SWGs aim to make development cooperation more effective, as set out in the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Currently taking place every five years, High-Level Round Table Meetings provide the forum to support the launch of the country’s national development plans. Round Table Implementation Meetings are held annually within five-year cycles to take stock of progress made in the past year and to set the direction for joint priorities for the coming year.

In 2025, Lao PDR will host the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting under the theme: “Enhanced Partnerships for Effective Development Cooperation in Implementing the Tenth National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026-2030) to Support the Country’s Smooth and Resilient Graduation from Least Development Country Status and Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”.

Objectives

The High-Level Round Table Meeting and the events leading up to it provide a critical opportunity for the Government of Lao PDR to communicate the key priorities of the next national development plan and to gauge development partners’ support for its implementation. An advanced draft of the Tenth NSEDP has been prepared by the Government of Lao PDR, setting out expected outputs and outcomes to advance national development through to 2030.

The Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting will be formally opened by the Prime Minister of Lao PDR. Following the opening, the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the economic sector will co-chair the session alongside potential high-level representation from UN Headquarters. The meeting aims to mobilise development partners’ support to the implementation of the Tenth NSEDP.

The Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting will further reflect on the conclusions of the pre-consultations that are being planned ahead of the High-Level Round Table Meeting. The proposed pre-consultations include a dialogue on ‘The Future of Economic Development in Lao PDR – Reforms to strengthen the business environment, boost fiscal revenues to stimulate investments and drive economic growth and diversification pathways away from natural resource

sectors’ and a dialogue on ‘The Future of Human Development in Lao PDR – Motivating people to participate in the economy and in advancing sustainable development’.

Participation:

Invitations will be extended to:

- Ministers from all line ministries, Vice Secretary General of the National Assembly, Vice President of Standing Committee of the National Assembly;
- Governors from 17 provinces and Vientiane Capital;
- Head Delegations of Development Partners /Ambassadors and embassies accredited to the Lao PDR (resident and non-resident);
- UN agencies, representatives of development partners and international organizations;
- Director Generals / Deputy Director Generals of Government entities;
- Director Generals of Planning and Investment of Provinces and Heads of International Cooperation Sections;
- Representatives of INGO Network, Non-Profit Associations and CSOs;
- Representatives of the private sector (Lao and International Chambers of Commerce and Industry).

Background documents for the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting

1. Report on the implementation of the 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021–2025);
2. Draft 10th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026–2030);
3. Draft VDCAP 2026-2035
4. Progress report on preparations for graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status;
5. Implementation plan for the transition strategy of Lao PDR after LDC graduation;
6. Review report of the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration on Effective Development Cooperation (2016–2025);
7. Foreign Aid Implementation Report (FAIR) for 2024–2025;
8. Consolidated report on the implementation of sector working group activities in collaboration with development partners;
9. Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, Country results brief – Global Partnership 2023-2026 Monitoring Round 4
10. Other important documents.

Events leading up to the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting

In preparation for the Round Table Meeting, the following preparatory events have been/are being organized:

- RTIM 2024 retreat (26 Feb 2025)
- Chairs and Co-Chairs of Sector Working Groups Meeting (July 2025)
 - Presentation on the 10th NSEDP Formulation and addressing inputs from the Sector Working Groups
 - Presentation on the draft Concept Note for the 14th HL-RTM 2025.
- Meeting with Non-Resident Partners to update on the 10th NSEDP Formulation and 14th HL-RTM (September 2025)
- Pre-consultation - ‘The Future of Economic Development in Lao PDR – Reforms to strengthen the business environment, boost fiscal revenues to stimulate investments and drive economic growth and diversification pathways away from natural resource sectors’ (September 2025)

- Pre-consultation – ‘The Future of Human Development in Lao PDR – Motivating people to participate in the economy and in advancing sustainable development’. (October 2025)

Sector Working Group Engagement in the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting

- **Pre-consultation Meetings**

Two pre-consultations are being planned ahead of the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting. The Sector Working Groups are expected to contribute as follows to the pre-consultations:

- Dialogue on ‘The Future of Economic Development in Lao PDR’: the RTP chairs invite the nomination from the co-chairs of one Sector Working Group from the Macroeconomics, Trade and Private Sector and Natural Resources and Environment SWGs to lead the planning for this dialogue, with support from the others mentioned. Under the direction of the lead co-chair group, co-chairs will draft the concept note, identify the speakers and moderators, and provide a summary of the key points of the discussion and the recommendations.
- Dialogue on ‘The Future of Human Development in Lao PDR’: the RTP chairs invite the co-chairs of the health and education SWGs to be jointly responsible for organizing this dialogue, including drafting the concept note, identifying the speakers and moderators, and providing a summary of the key points of the discussion and the recommendations.
- Department International Finance and Cooperation of the Ministry of Finance will be responsible for the logistical arrangements.

- **Development exhibition**

All Sector Working Groups are invited to display materials relevant to their work and contribution to sustainable development in Lao PDR at the venue of the High-Level RTM.

- **Press Conference**

A press conference is organized at the end of the High-Level Round Table Meeting. Sector Working Groups Chairs, Co-chairs and Secretariats are encouraged to participate in the press conference.

Debriefing with the President of the Lao PDR following the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting

In line with the RTP Guidelines, following the Fourteenth High-Level Round Table Meeting, high-level representatives of Development Partners, the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the Sector Working Groups will debrief the President of the Lao PDR on the outcomes of the meeting. Participation in this debriefing will be limited to selected invitees only.

Focal points within Department of International Finance and Cooperation/Ministry of Finance

For all matters relating to the overall preparation of the 14th HL-RTM in 2025, please contact:

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Please note that updated information on activities, consultations and other related matters about the RTP including SWGs will be published through the recently revamped RTP website (<http://rtm.org.la>) on a regular basis.