

Concept Note

Pre-Consultation to the High-Level Round Table Meeting

Theme: Post LDC Graduation, Unlocking New Development Ambitions – Growth, jobs and Technology

23 October 2025 (tbc), Venue: tbc

Background

Lao PDR's economy shows signs of recovery, with 4 percent GDP growth recorded for 2024, mainly driven by services including tourism and logistics sectors. Following sharp currency depreciation and high inflation rates over the past three years, the Government has been able to stabilize the Lao Kip and inflation rates this year with tightened monetary policy measures. This includes increasing interest rates, mandating the conversion of a significant share of export earnings into local currency and introducing a currency exchange platform. Despite improvements in revenue performance, the country's fiscal space remains constrained due to debt service burden. The latest Asian Development Outlook indicated that spending on education and health has declined sharply, falling to just 1.2% and 1.0% of GDP in 2024.

Lao PDR's graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status is scheduled for November 2026. Early analysis indicates potential trade losses, particularly in the European Union market, with exports in clothing, sugars and confectionery, leather and footwear, and cereals projected to decline by \$66.3M. A 2023 study by the International Trade Centre (ITC) showed that in addition to the European Union, China has offered a unilateral-LDC specific trade window for Laos. As exports to China are expected to grow significantly in the next few years, the ITC still projects significant trade loss from graduation (\$734 million loss). However, graduation is not the culmination of development, but rather the beginning of a new chapter. The transition brings with it the phasing out of certain international support measures, including preferential trade and development financing. To ensure that this transition is both smooth and sustainable, it is vital that Lao PDR's policies and partnerships are recalibrated to safeguard hard-won gains and mitigate risks arising from external shocks.

In 2024, the Party issued a Resolution to set a vision to build a self-reliant economy which is the central theme of the upcoming Tenth National Socio-Economic Development Plan (10th NSEDP) for 2026-2030. The Government of Lao PDR targets an annual GDP growth of 5.5 percent for the upcoming 10th NSEDP. Sustained macro-economic pressures, labour shortages due to outmigration, constrained investor confidence, climate shocks and the current global and regional economic uncertainty pose risks to Lao PDR's growth prospects.

This year, as Lao PDR embarks on finalising the 10th NSEDP, the nation is entering a critical phase—one that carries unprecedented opportunities, as well as significant challenges. At the upcoming High-Level Round Table Meeting scheduled for November 2025, there exists a

unique window for the government, development partners, and stakeholders to reimagine and reinforce the country’s development trajectory for the upcoming 10th NSEDP period.

Objectives

Ahead of the High-Level Round Table Meeting, the pre-consultation aims to set the stage for a forward-looking dialogue on the future of development in Lao PDR. The pre-consultation provides a strategic platform for the Government, Development Partners, Private Sector actors and civil society to collectively reimagine Lao PDR’s development trajectory for a post-LDC graduation era.

The pre-consultation will complement sectoral dialogues held within the Sector Working Groups (SWGs). Building on the discussions and recommendations from the 2023 and 2024 RTIM, and the findings of the MTR of the 9th NSEDP, the pre-consultation meeting is expected to generate specific, forward-looking recommendations that will be presented at the HL-RTM as a contribution to the finalization of the Tenth National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

Structure

Previous dialogues on human development and economic transformation will serve as a starting point to the dialogue which is meant to be forward looking and future oriented. Two guest speakers from countries that have recently graduated will be invited to present lessons learned from LDC graduation.

It will be followed by a panel discussion including no more than four to five speakers followed by an open discussion with the audience. Given time constraints, participants will be encouraged to limit interventions to maximum of 3 minutes. Timekeeping will be used to support the panel discussion. Pre-registration to make interventions is not required. The moderator will conclude the panel discussion with a summary of the reflections and recommendations that were highlighted in the dialogue.

The moderator will be a senior Government Official. Panelists will be identified based on leadership and interest expressed through the Sector Working Groups (SWGs) relevant to the theme.

Agenda

Time	Session
08.30-09.00	Registration
09.00-09.10	Opening Remarks <i>H.E. Mr Santiphap Phomvihane, Minister of Finance</i>
09.10-09.15	Remarks <i>Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, United Nations Resident Coordinator</i>
09.15-09.35	Taking stock of progress – economic progress and human development <i>H.E. Soulivath Souvannachoumklam, Deputy Minister of Finance</i>

09.35-10.10	Keynote Presentation – Post LDC graduation, lessons from countries that graduated from LDC status <i>Speaker from Bhutan</i> <i>Speaker from Maldives</i>
10.10-10.30	Group Photo and Coffee Break
10.30-11.45	Panel Discussion –Unlocking New Development Ambitions – Growth, jobs and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 minutes discussion • 30 minutes open floor Q&A (maximum 3 minutes each) • 10 minutes – moderator summary <p>Suggested participants for consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator – <i>Dr Sitthiroth Rasphone</i> • Technology – <i>XM / founder of Loca</i> • Sustainability – <i>green growth/ GGGI?</i> • Jobs – <i>Khwima Nthara – Country Manager, World Bank</i> • <i>Dr. Phouphet , Vice President, National University of Laos</i> • <i>DG from MOIC – agri, energy, tourism</i>
11.45-11.50	Remarks <i>Mr. Bakhodir Burkhanov, United Nations Resident Coordinator</i>
11.50-12.00	Closing Remarks <i>H.E. Mr Santiphap Phomvihane, Minister of Finance</i>

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