

Remarks by  
H.E Choummaly SAYASONE, President of the Lao PDR  
at the Special Event on “Turning Evidence into Practice:  
Learning from What works to Accelerate MDGs  
New York, 22 September 2010  
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Your Excellency Madame Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator,  
Distinguished Guests,

It is indeed a great honor for the Lao PDR to be selected as one of the countries to share lessons learnt and best practices in attaining the MDGs at country level.

Madame Chair,

The Lao PDR is strongly committed to achieving the MDGs. To this end, the Lao Government launched the National Poverty Eradication Program, later modified and developed into the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy focusing on 4 priority sectors namely agriculture and forestry, education, health, and infrastructure development. The strategy has been streamlined into the 6<sup>th</sup> five-year National Social and Economic Development Plan for 2006-2010 and aims towards achieving an annual economic growth of 7.5% and higher as well as to fundamentally reducing poverty. Likewise, this important development plan targets to involve all sectors of society in the national poverty reduction effort, establishes various development funds such as village development funds and revolving funds at all levels administered by mass organizations. In addition, poverty reduction fund was also set up. At the local level, a nationwide campaign towards being “cultural and crime-free village” has been undertaken, among others. For development to reach out to the most needed people, a village-group known as “Kum Ban” bringing together small villages has been formed so as to ensure that people could better get access to basic social services.

In view of making development process participatory and inclusive one, the Government has widely encouraged the private sector, both domestic and foreign, to engage in the implementation process of the national development plans. By doing this, the Government aims to improve the overall wellbeing of people, strengthening human resource capacity and develop rural infrastructure. One of the best examples is the construction of the multi-stakeholders Nam Theun 2 project which has proved to be a development model in the country and highly regarded in the region. The Government also attaches great importance to resource mobilization from external sources through the effective implementation of the Paris Declaration and the localized Vientiane Declaration.

Throughout the last 10 years, in implementing the MDGs, a remarkable progress has been made such as achieving sustained annual economic growth rate of 7% and GDP per capita increased from about USD 300 recorded in the 1990s to over USD 900 in 2009. In addition, poverty declined from 48% in 1990 to 26% in 2009. In social and cultural front, we also have achieved satisfactory results as the recent survey has indicated the improved enrollment rate of primary school children from 58% in 1991 to 84% in 2005 and maternal mortality rate dropped from 650 in 1995 to 405 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2005. During the same period, infant mortality rate also went down from 104 to 70 per 1,000 live-births. Likewise, the status of women in general has become more prominent as shown in the 25% representation of woman parliamentarians in the National Assembly and Lao women have played an increasingly important role in the national social-economic development efforts.

Madame Chair,

These achievements are attributed to the following key factors:

- The Lao PDR has maintained solid political stability combined with unshakable solidarity among the multi-ethnic people. The people have been resolutely supportive of the Government's policy and have actively contributed to the national development cause.
- The MDGs are inclusively streamlined into the National Social and Economic Development Plans.
- MDGs implementation is closely supervised by the National Advisory Committee and is carried out in an inclusive and participatory manner.
- Coordination mechanism among government agencies from central to local levels has been established and 8 thematic working groups between the government and its development partners have also been set up to ensure that the implementation are well-coordinated and the results are closely monitored and properly assessed.

Madame Chair,

Despite the above-mentioned achievements, there are some challenges, which the Lao PDR must overcome:

- Human resource capacity has not yet met development needs. The problem of malnutrition persists, maternal and child mortality remains high compared with countries in the region.
- Resource limitation.
- Inadequate infrastructure, limited access to education and health services especially in the rural and remote areas.

Therefore, to realize all the MDGs by 2015 as well as for the country to graduate from LDC status by 2020, the Lao Government has recently laid out the National Social-Economic Development Plan for 2011-2015, under which the following objectives are set to be met:

- Achieve economic growth rate of above 8%
- Continue to improve and develop infrastructure especially in the rural and remote areas with a view to reducing gap between urban and rural, rich and poor.
- Focus on social sector particularly education, agriculture by ensuring food security and improving nutrition
- Continue to develop the economy with a focus on development of small and medium enterprise in a way so as industrialization and modernization can take off with serious attention given to environmental protection
- Enhance regional and international cooperation with a view to exchanging lessons learnt and best practices as well as mobilizing resources to complement the national efforts.
- Enhance international trade and investment to achieve the set-targets.

In conclusion, I would like to express my profound thanks to all friendly countries and international organizations, to the UN agencies in particular for the close cooperation and continued assistance rendered. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the meeting that the Lao Government will organize the 10th Roundtable Meeting in Vientiane from 20-21 October 2010 to mobilize resources for the implementation of the 7th five-year

plan for 2011-2015 and the MDGs. On this note, it is my great pleasure to learn that her Excellency Madame Helen Clark will attend the Round Table Meeting. This reiterates the strong commitment of the United Nations towards helping the Lao PDR to achieve its development agenda.

In addition, as the Lao PDR will host the first State Party Conference of the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions, from 9-12 November 2010 in Vientiane and we look forward to welcoming your high-level delegations to participate in the said Conference, while in Vientiane the participants can also witness the festive commemoration of the 450th anniversary of Vientiane proclamation as a Capital of Laos.

I wish all distinguished guests a very good health and greater success in your noble tasks.

Thank you.