

**Delegation from Lao People's Democratic Republic**  
**Position Paper for the United Nations Development Programme**

The following topics are before the United Nations Development Programme: Urbanization and Sustainable Development; Electoral Cycle Support in Post-Conflict Settings; and Building Climate Change Resilience through Adaptation Strategies. Lao People's Democratic Republic believes that these topics have significance within the international community and looks forward to discussing them at the upcoming meeting of the United Nations Development Programme.

**I. Urbanization and Sustainable Development**

Until 2030, 97% of the world's population growth is attributed to developing countries, mainly in Asia and Africa. As social properties in urban areas are further developed the migration from rural areas into urban areas persists. The share of the world's population living in urban areas will increase by 13% to 68% in 2050, resulting in an overstraining of the currently established social, technical, and economic infrastructure, while environmental implications are often unpredictable. The overuse of sanitation, water supply, and the healthcare system along the uncontrolled increase in pollution is closely tied to an increase in child undernutrition, non-communicable diseases, and ultimately to growing inequality among urban families. To offset the increasing inequalities in urban ecosystems, targeted measures to increase the efficiency and accessibility of technical and social infrastructure must be promoted.

Lao PDR strongly endorses the eleventh goal "Sustainable cities and communities" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations and the efforts of the UNDP since the last Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in 2016. The GA resolution A/RES/71/256 "New Urban Agenda" calls for social inclusion and refers in paragraph 145 to the use of international public finance for sustainable urban development. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030 as part of the World Urban Forum 2018 urges for integrated solutions and for leverage of the contribution of any individual. Lao PDR acknowledges the support of the UNDP during the implementation process of the 7<sup>th</sup> Five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan of Lao PDR and the formulation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020), in which Lao PDR aims to further focuses on the increase in clean water supply and sanitation facilities in urban areas especially in schools fostered by the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Lao PDR's development reflects the continuous efforts to improve livability in urban areas as e.g. the life expectancy has increased by c. 4.5%-points since 2005 and the secondary gross enrolment ratio within the educational system increased by 23%-points

Lao PDR strongly urges for a higher degree of inclusive regional development to foster economic growth triggering an increase in societal integration and an enhancement of technical and social infrastructure. The exchange of best practices and resources among regional organizations, such as ASEAN, increases the efficacy and the sustainability of urban development processes. However, Lao PDR emphasizes with Thailand and China on the discussion about the level of international involvement on national policies, on July 26, 2016, during the Habitat II discussions. Lao PDR calls for higher individual contributions of member states in terms of resources and the sharing of data on successful projects. In conjunction with adequately defined and implemented national policies, this will help to foster sustainable urban developments.

**II. Electoral Cycle Support in Post-Conflict Settings**

Democracy is advancing around the world but despite tremendous efforts of the world community, we are still experiencing war and undemocratic regimes in this world up to this day. Through current developments, conflicts become increasingly asymmetric and the societies of affected states are completely destroyed after ending the conflict. Setting up democratic processes and a legitimate government representing the people and thereby fulfilling Art. 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which stresses that the will of the people is the main source for governmental authority, is difficult after a country has been devastated. Member states without a representative government and no democratic structures are not only a danger for their own people but beyond that a danger for neighboring regions, too.

Lao People's Democratic Republic suffered from an extremely long and devastating civil war between 1959 and 1975. Therefore, the Lao people know what different regions currently undergo. The Laotian people also know how it is to rebuild the country, free it from an authoritarian regime and establish an electoral cycle and thus a democratic system. The success of the taken measures after the end of the conflict is provided by the World Bank listing Lao PDR among the political most stable post-conflict countries.

Laos supports the existing UNDP programme that assists post-conflict countries to establish Electoral Cycles and stable Electoral Management Bodies. The Lao Government supports every action taken by the UNDP to ensure election credibility, provide assistance with legal reforms, provide expertise in regard to financing, support voter and civic education, and also the suggestion of strategies to increase political participation of marginalized groups. It is nonetheless concerned that certain initiatives taken by the UNDP concerning constitution making pose an interference with the sovereignty of a member state.

Apart from that, Lao PDR supports every assistance or consulting and every stability-assuring measure for an assistance-seeking member state that is possible and necessary to rebuild a member state after a conflict as fast and sustainable as possible.

### **III. Building Climate Change Resilience through Adaptation Strategies**

Humanity is facing one of its most complex challenges with the climate rapidly changing and climate abnormalities becoming normality. The long-term rise in the average temperature of the Earth's climate system is estimated to be as high as 4 or 5 °C if no action is taken. This issue is a problem every member state is affected by. Lao People's Democratic Republic is predicted to be among the countries which bear the strongest consequences of this climate phenomena provoked by human-made pollutants. Lao PDR is very vulnerable to natural disasters, including extreme weather events which have been increasing in frequency and intensity. Almost all the country's farming systems are susceptible to flooding, drought and the late onset of the rainy seasons. With 80% of the Lao people relying on agriculture and smallholder farms being predominant, the impacts of such natural disasters can be all the more devastating.

Therefore, Lao People's Democratic Republic sees the global problem of climate change and is willing to support measures against it. That is why Lao signed and ratified the Paris Agreement and strongly supports the 13<sup>th</sup> goal "Climate Action" of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations and the ongoing efforts of the United Nations to reach that goal. At this point of time tackling climate change is not enough anymore. It is also necessary to build resilience and adapt to the new changes in climate.

To contribute to that, the Lao Government is looking to create stronger policies and legislation by drafting a disaster risk management and climate change law. Furthermore, in March 2016 the UNDP in Lao PDR and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment formally launched the 'Lao PDR Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (Lao PDR INDC) Project in which Laos among other points defined the goal of increasing resilience of key economic sectors and natural resources to climate change and its impacts. Lao PDR recently implemented measures for sustainable forest management which not only improves the resilience of communities and ecosystems but also reduces GHG emissions by absorbing carbon dioxide. The forestry sector is one of the main focal points of the Lao Government since it strongly contributes to the state's economy and at the same time is livelihood of many Laotians. In the agricultural sector the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, funded by the UNDP, implemented a project called *Improving the Resilience of the Agricultural Sector to Climate Change (IRAS)* which aims at educating the population on the climate change and possible adaptation processes to build resilience as well as financing adaptations. 37,678 people directly benefitted from this project.

Lao PDR urges the world community to further strengthen the efforts in building resilience through adaptation. Since a tremendous part of climate change cannot be unmade anymore, we see this as the only possibility to tackle the climate hazards the world will experience. To assure the best possible resilience Laos asks upon every member state to share best practices and their resources such as technologies. Joint adaptation actions and strategies in the regional context will prove to be an efficient measure to build resilience within similar climate zones. In addition, in the opinion of the Lao Government it is of utmost importance that the funding of adaptation strategies, such as the Adaptations Fund (AF) is increased and more projects of the UNDP with developing countries in affected regions are launched.