



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**Statement by  
H.E. Ambassador Alounkeo Kittikhoun  
Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR  
at the High-Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals,  
Roundtable 1: Poverty and Hunger  
New York, 25 September 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

As we have passed the halfway point toward MDGs by 2015, the High-level Event today provides us an excellent opportunity to take stock of the progress made and address the challenges encountered in our efforts of realizing the MDGs. Although, there has been significant progress made toward achieving some of the goals, yet it is uneven and slow in regions where the challenges are greatest, particularly in the least developed countries. Besides, the global food crisis endangers millions of the world's most vulnerable, and threatens to reverse critical gains made toward reducing poverty and hunger as outlined in MDG No. 1. The slow-down of the global economy combined with soaring oil prices, conflict, weak policy framework and climate change are among the additional challenges that continue to impede progress in attaining the MDGs and other IADGs.

Mr. Chairman,

At the halfway point, the Lao PDR is at a critical stage where it is looking beyond 2015 and towards 2020 by when the country wants to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status. In general, the implementation of MDGs at national level has rendered a relatively steady progress as the MDGs targets have been streamlined in its Sixth National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) for 2006–2010. In other words, the success in implementing the Sixth Plan will determine to what extent the Lao PDR is able to meet its MDG targets.

The recently completed second national progress report has shown that the Lao PDR is relatively on track toward most of MDGs. Overall, it appears at this stage that Lao PDR is well on track for meeting the key targets especially those on poverty and hunger as well as gender equality. Over the past decade, poverty incidence has declined from estimated 48 percent in 1990 to 39 percent in 1997 and further to 32 percent in 2003. In 2006, poverty rate was reduced to 28.7 percent and the country is on course to attain the MDG target of halving poverty by 2015. This progress has been made due to the following factors. Over the past several years, the Lao PDR has been successful in sustaining its robust economic growth, with real GDP growth of 7% and above (from 2002-2005). The implementation of the 6<sup>th</sup> Plan has so far yielded important results and we expect an economic growth rate of 7.9% and an annual GDP per capita of 810 USD for fiscal year 2007-2008, compared with 678 USD recorded in the previous year. If this trend persists the country will certainly reach MDGs target that is 24 percent by 2015. The Government gives high priority to reducing poverty and balancing population growth with socio-economic development and defined food production among top priorities. In addition, the Government strongly promotes gender equality and is making a conscious effort to include both women and men in its economic development. Men and women have equal rights in the Lao Constitution, and a national mechanism to spearhead gender-sensitive development, the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (LaoNCAW), has been established. LaoNCAW is mandated to mainstream gender across all sectors and in all provinces. Success has been recorded especially



the proportion of female members of the National Assembly has increased significantly, from 6% in 1990 to 25% in 2006, and is among the highest in the region.

Mr. Chairman,

While the aforesaid important achievements clearly demonstrate positive developmental progress, the Lao PDR still faces impediments. Like in other developing countries, rising oil prices, inflation and a global economic slowdown all stand in the way of our path to economic prosperity. Despite laudable improvement in addressing poverty and hunger, malnutrition remains a major concern in Lao PDR. Estimates suggest that despite considerable efforts, 38% of children under-five years of age are underweight. Malnutrition or stunting remains a problem affecting 41% of children under the age of five and requires urgent attention by both government and the development community. As a first step, it is recommended to include stunting as an additional MDG indicator for Lao PDR to ensure constant monitoring and action. Poverty reduction is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to meet the targets on reducing malnutrition but it will not automatically result into an improved nutrient dietary intake. In overcoming this challenge there is an urgent need for inter-sectoral policies to address both malnutrition and poverty in a comprehensive way. Therefore, an inter-sectoral Nutrition Policy is being set up and acknowledges that nutrition is central in development and has listed ten main objectives for 2020.

This year, we are also experiencing a severe flood, inflicting huge material loss nationwide, especially the damage caused to crops and vast areas of agricultural land. Yet, in spite of all this, by improving the quality of basic infrastructure, human resources and cooperating with international partners, we are determined to pursue our twin strategies of poverty eradication and regional integration. At this pace, we hope to extricate our country from the shackles of underdevelopment by the year 2020. Our vision is eventually to reach an economic stage from which industrialization can take-off, and to construct a modern State in which our people can live in peace, harmony and prosperity.

In concluding, I wish our deliberation a great success.

Thank You.