



Lao PDR

## Minutes of the Annual Review Meeting 2010

*14<sup>th</sup> February 2011, Lane-Xang Hotel, Vientiane, Laos.*

### I. Introduction

Since the late 1990s, UN agencies have provided technical support to the National Assembly (NA). In 2007 the National Assembly undertook a strategic assessment of its own development priorities for the period 2008-2020. The findings were developed by the National Assembly into a concept note for coordinated international development cooperation. The United Nations responded to this request by proposing a Joint Programme of support to the National Assembly. The Joint Programme approach presents a unified work plan and budget, which coordinates inputs from all development partners under a common management arrangement. It seeks to increase aid effectiveness by improving coordination in the delivery of resources, while avoiding duplication and gaps. It also supports national ownership by explicitly aligning development assistance to national priorities.

The Programme seeks to strengthen the capacities of the National Assembly and its staff to improve the quality of services provided to parliamentarians and their constituents, as well as building the capacities of MPs to exercise the oversight function and to influence policy making in order to enable this institution to fully contribute to a truly participatory and representative democracy. The National Assembly as Implementing Partner is responsible and accountable for managing the Programme, including the monitoring and evaluation of Programme interventions, achieving Programme outputs and for the effective use of donors' resources.

The Programme contributes to UNDAF Outcome 3: "by 2011, strengthened capacities of public and private institutions to fulfil their duties and greater people's participation in governance and advocacy for the promotion of human rights in conformity with the Millennium Declaration."

The Programme contributes to the achievement of all MDGs through strengthening the legislative, representative and oversight functions of parliament – function that contributes to ensuring necessary legislation is put in place, adequate budgets are allocated, and government agencies take necessary actions to realize MDG targets. Additionally, the Programme specifically supports the achievement of MDG 3 (Gender

Equality) and the associated Indicator 12 (proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament) through gender awareness activities with Members and specific activities with female Members.

The Annual Review Meeting (ARM) is an important tool for monitoring project performance. It provides a forum for Programme partners and stakeholders to review and discuss results, achievements, issues and challenges of programme implementation.

An Annual Review Meeting was held last 14 February 2011, 08:30 – 12:00 at Lane-Xang Hotel in Vientiane Capital. The meeting was presided over by Hon. Mr. Thongteun Xayasene, member of the NA Standing Committee and Chief of the NA Cabinet.

For this important meeting, the National Assembly has invited representatives of several government departments, Embassies, UN agencies and international finance institutions. (A full list of participants is attached to this report)

## **II. Agenda**

- Objectives of the Meeting and Introduction of Chairpersons, by MC
- Opening Remarks by representatives of the National Assembly, UN Resident Coordinator (a.i.) and the European Union Delegation
- Presentation on progress report, achievements for 2010 and Resource Mobilization
- Presentation and plenary on Work Plan for 2011
- Wrap-up comments by UNDP Resident Representative (a.i.)
- Closing Remarks by representative of the National Assembly.

## **III. Summary of Proceedings**

Opening remarks were made by Hon. Mr. Thongteun Xayasene for the National Assembly, by Mr. Leik Boonwaat for the UN and Mr. Henry Prankerd for the European Union Delegation. The presentations focused on 2010 activities achievements, resource mobilization and 2011 work plan. Presentations were followed by comments and questions from invited guests. The meeting was brought to wrap-up comment by Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, UNDP Resident Representative a.i, and closed by Hon. Mr. Thongteun Xayasene.

### **Opening remarks on behalf of the National Assembly**

By Hon. Mr. Thongteun Xayasene, Member of the National Assembly, Member of the Standing Committee and Chief of the NA Cabinet.

Hon. Mr. Thongteun Xayasene opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. In his opening remarks he expressed his satisfaction over the UN Joint Programme on Support to an Effective National Assembly (SELNA) that provides a close cooperation and assistance to the Lao National Assembly (NA). He stated that SELNA JP not only helps NA to review laws in preparation for the session, but it also supplies experts to help NA review and align laws on international standards. He also commented that the cooperation with the SELNA Programme enabled the NA to make a significant effort to improve itself through such activities as visiting local areas to collect information, organizing meetings and listening to the expectations and opinions of local people. The NA also disseminates laws to people in remote areas. A telephone hotline has allowed more people to express their views on government policy and laws before approval decisions are made in the National Assembly. Extending the role of the NA will contribute to its role in protecting the rights of citizens by enhancing monitoring of the government and judicial system. He also mentioned that the upcoming election of 7<sup>th</sup> legislature of the National Assembly which will be held at the end of April 2011, 132 candidates will be selected for this new legislature and encourages more women candidates to work with the NA as the citizen representatives.

Lastly, Mr. Thongteun expressed his appreciation to the UN Agencies, the EU and other international organizations that have provided financial and technical assistance to the National Assembly in the recent years, especially UNDP that increased its contribution by 250,000 US\$ to the SELNA JP at the end of 2010. The promotion of the role of the National Assembly is a Lao Government's priority issue in order to develop good governance and increase accountability and transparency as instruments toward the achievement of sustainable development.

#### **Message on behalf of UN Agencies**

By Mr. Leik Boonwaat, UN Resident Coordinator (a.i.) and UNODC Resident Representative

Speaking on behalf of UN partner Agencies, Mr. Leik Boonwaat praised the achievements of the National Assembly as being of great significance for the everyday life of ordinary Lao citizens. The NA not only provided greater legislative and oversight role over the government, but also increasingly became a true representative of the Lao People, to ensure the next NSEDP will be implemented and the country is moving towards its MDG targets. He commented that the SELNA Programme performed highly satisfactory results to support the Assembly's own strategy to enhance its legislative, oversight and representation role. He expressed his satisfaction for the continued leadership and contribution made by the National Assembly to the SELNA Programme and expressed his

sincere appreciation to the UN Partner agencies and Development partners, the European Commission, the German and Singapore Governments for their strong and committed support to this Programme.

**Message on behalf of the European Union Delegation**

By Mr. Henry Pranker, Chargé d'affaires, European Union Delegation

Mr. Henry Pranker of the EU congratulated the National Assembly for its successful implementation of the SELNA Joint Programme. He commented that the NA through the SELNA Programme achieved a number of significant successes such as the development of the hotline system for direct link to the constituencies, the quality of the laws review. He also mentioned that 2011 will be an important year not only for election, but also with the incoming NA. The SELNA is expected to continue to provide an excellent support to the NA. He emphasized the SELNA Programme as an example of Development Partners working together with the Government to achieve a common objective. He expressed his opinion on behalf of the EU that the Programme had been successful in terms of effectiveness and resource utilization, based on the recent EU results oriented evaluation mission. He mentioned that the EU had already been able to contribute up to US\$ 800,000 to the programme and expected to provide further US\$ 650,000 in the last course of the Programme.

**Presentation on programme progress, achievements for 2010 and resource mobilization**

By Ms. Sousada Phoummasak, National Programme Director, SELNA JP

Ms. Sousada Phoummasak gave a presentation of the results and achievements of the SELNA Joint Programme in 2010. Her detailed presentation is attached as an Annex. In her presentation, Ms. Phoummasak briefly highlighted the National Assembly contribution to significant improvements in the quality of laws and policies, and improved capacities to scrutinize the government. The NA is the highest legislative organ of the country and works across all sectors of the society, adopting the social and economic development plan, and increasing its oversight role over the Executive. She stressed that the SELNA Joint Programme is expected to achieve the following results: (1) Enhanced parliamentary capacity for exercising legislative, oversight and representative duties; (2) Increased opportunities for interaction between members and constituents; (3) developed quality and upgraded parliamentary and support systems; and (4) strengthened close relations through partnerships with UN partner agencies and Government Agencies.

She stated that SELNA Programme provided technical support in the review and drafting of a number of important new and amended laws (Laws on the NA, Elections, Consumer Protection, HIV/AIDS, Economic Disputes resolution, Statistics and Metrology), provided

effective mechanism for increased public awareness and helped NA Members to have a clear understanding about the local situations through the conduction of outreach missions, field visits and the feedback received from the hotline. She mentioned that since the implementation of the local councils initiative had been postponed up to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> legislature, the NA had capacitated its constituency offices to facilitate the development of local councils in the future. She mentioned that the NA Committees and staff, both at central and provincial levels have enhanced their knowledge and skills on internal and secretariat capacities on events management, media reporting, desk-research, note-taking and reporting technique, IT skills, language skills, which have been priority activities of the NA for improved support to the NA Members and Committees.

The NA through the SELNA Programme collaborated with various partners, donors and government agencies, and also partnered with various parliaments in the region and abroad.

#### **Presentation on Work Plan for 2011**

By Mr. Khampasong Ratsachack, SELNA Senior Programme Coordinator

Mr. Khampasong Ratsachack gave a presentation on the context for the SELNA activities and outputs for the third year [2011] of implementation of the Joint Programme. He cited a number of parameters taken into consideration when preparing the work plan activities. He reminded that SELNA JP support will focus on the preparation for the upcoming NA election and campaign period; most of the activities will aim to improve the capacities of NA staff and constituency offices and support the newly elected Members in their tasks and duties. He mentioned that one of the key expected outcomes of the SELNA Programme was to help the NA and the government to develop new techniques for policy development and law making. The SELNA programme endeavours to enhance the NA's capacity in budgetary appraisal and oversight by assisting it in identifying options for greater involvement in budgetary process, draft instructions for NA Member on budgetary procedures and also enhance public awareness of the NA role, function and proceedings by supporting a number of activities such as internship programme for students with Departments and Committees, improved language skills of selected staff, expand the system of NA hotline, organize in-country media training, develop the user friendly new Member's handbook and disseminate copies of newly promulgated laws.

He mentioned that one critical activity scheduled during the first half of the year, which will have a great impact to SELNA Programme for the next two years, is the implementation of a mid-term evaluation to review the results and outputs of SELNA since the inception of the programme.

#### **IV. Summary of main discussion points**

##### ***Hon. Prof. Dr. Phontep Pholsena, Vice-Chair of the NA Social and Cultural Affairs Committee***

Prof. Phontep suggested including indicators in the Annual report in order to certify the efficiency and effectiveness of the outcomes. Moreover, it is important to set priorities and use the available funding from the development partners to comply with the National Socio—Economic Plan objectives and to achieve the MDGs by 2015. He recommended to the SELNA Programme to focus more on Human Resource Development, especially in improving planning and management skills, and foreign language skills of NA members and staff, developing clear mandates and job descriptions for more efficient vertical and horizontal line coordination, and training for staff in the constituency offices to improve the quality of the support services in the NA provincial offices.

##### ***Dr. Petra Mutlu, GIS (German cooperation) Country Director***

Dr. Mutlu reasserted the support of the German cooperation to the SELNA programme and the National Assembly. She confirmed the continuous support and commitment of the CIM/GIS to the implementation of the Joint Programme as well as to the work of the NA committees through sponsoring two experts with the Social & Cultural Affairs, and the Economics, Planning & Finance committees of the Assembly. She expressed the interest of the German cooperation to further work on the reduction of Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence in the Lao PDR.

##### ***Ms. Shoko Ishikawa, Representative, UN Women***

Ms. Shoko Ishikawa expressed her thanks to the NA and in particular to the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee for organizing the conference on Gender Based Violence which is a milestone in the gender issues discussion. There has been increased understanding and acknowledgement of the significance of Gender Equality in Parliament. She also hoped that this year's election will focus on continuing and enhancing awareness raising on Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence. She affirmed that UNWomen will bring and share the experiences of research on Gender Based Violence in the region.

##### ***Hon. Prof. Dr. Davone Vangvichit, acting Chairperson of the NA Law committee***

As the Government of Lao PDR has a policy to establish a State based on the principles of the Rule of Law by 2020, and the NA being vested with the power to adopt legislation, he is pleased that SELNA is planning to support the preparation of the Law on Laws. He recommended that SELNA continue to support the process of making new laws and amending old/existing laws in line with the changing environment and aligning domestic laws with international conventions and treaties. He also insisted on the importance of advocacy and law dissemination in each constituency to improve the understanding of the people, and for the NA to scrutinize the effectiveness and implementation of the laws in

the country. He said that it is important to ensure that the people participate in law making and efforts should be made to improve people's understanding of the laws especially people in remote rural areas and illiterate people. He proposed for the SELNA Programme to develop easy-to-understand brochures on laws and important issues, taking into account the local context to be able to address citizens' needs.

***Mr. Phoukhong Sisoulath, Programme Manager, International Law Project (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)***

The SELNA Programme and the International Law Project carried out a number of joint activities together such as the intersession programmes and the ratification of laws. 2011 is the first year of the 7<sup>th</sup> legislature with new NA members. It is critical to pay attention to raising awareness of the NA members about the laws that have been ratified by the Government. Emphasis should be placed on converting legislation into laws. The Law on Laws will be very important. In relation to international law ratification process, support should also be given to the administrative agent in reporting on execution and implementation. He also stressed the importance of improving the NA petitions mechanism at the grass-roots level.

***Mr. Inpone Senekhamty, Programme Officer, European Union Delegation***

Mr. Inpone asked whether some of the activities planned for 2009 which were not carried out but deferred to 2010 have been completed and described in the report. Lack of resources has been one of the challenges of this programme resulting in cancellation of some activities. It is important to practically plan activities within the available budget and stick to the plan. Contribution from other sources is possible and would be beneficial.

***Ms. Sisomboune Ounavong, Deputy Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Planning and Investment***

The SELNA Programme is a good example of many partners working together to support the NA. The programme however has limited resources and this has resulted in certain work plan activities not being carried out. Ms. Sisomboune suggested that a consultation on the work plan and budget between the SELNA Programme and development partners be organized in order to prioritize activities in line with the budget available and the national agenda of the NA or explore possible further resource mobilization.

***Mr. Thanta Kongphaly, Director General, Department of Economics, Planning and Finance***

As the NA is expected to approve the 7th National Socio-Economic Plan, it is essential that the Assembly emphasizes on scrutiny of the implementation of National budget by creating different tools and mechanisms for increased cooperation among committees, together with research institutes. The tools to be used can be manuals on budget

monitoring, or on procedures between the State Audit Office, the NA and the Ministry of Finance. In addition, it is necessary to enhance human resources skills in the NA to provide better support services to the different components of the Assembly as well as improve coordination arrangements between different committees.

### **Wrap up comments**

by Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, UNDP Resident Representative a.i.

In her wrap up comments, Ms. Yokosuka considered the NA roles in legislation, oversight and representation should be further strengthened. She was pleased to note that there exists a consensus on the need for more detailed indicators to measure the achievements and effectiveness of the programme. She highlighted the importance of linking the programme's activities with the long-term development strategy of the country, including a clear understanding of how the NA may better contribute to achieve the Development Goals of the country. She also noted participants' interest in the importance of further capacity development of the NA. Further to the elections to be held in April this year, the newly elected members of the NA will most certainly play a key role in the oversight of the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> national Social-Economic Plan, to achieve the MDGs by 2015. She expressed her satisfaction to see that the National Assembly and the Joint Programme has planned a very busy work plan for the upcoming election year and that there was general endorsement of the 2011 work plan. Ms. Yokosuka pointed out another success of the programme, which is that all development partners including UN agencies and the European Union, Germany, and Singapore have worked closely together in supporting the National Assembly, not only financially but also in terms of technical assistance. She encouraged all stakeholders and new partners to continue this joint force in supporting the NA.

### **Closing Remarks on behalf of the National Assembly**

by Hon. Mr. Thongteun Xayasene, Member of the National Assembly, Member of the Standing Committee and Chief of the NA Cabinet

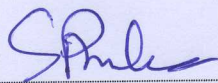
In his closing remarks, Hon. Mr. Thongteun thanked all participants and acknowledged the main programme partners – UN Partner Agencies (UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNAIDS), European Union, other international organizations and Embassies such as those of the Governments of Germany and Singapore for their continuous commitment. He stressed that the NA members will now have full control of the constituency offices as the budget of the NA provincial offices will no longer depend on the budget of the local administrations. This will increase the accountability of the provincial and district administrations to the Assembly members, promote a closer relationship with the population and contribute to the



establishment of local councils by 2015. He mentioned that there have been many successes with regards to the implementation over the last two years of the SELNA Programme. He reiterated that the NA is still in the need to mobilize additional funds to implement its national strategy plan 2007-2020, to further strengthen the role of the legislature to contribute to removing the Lao PDR from the least developed countries status by 2020 and to achieve a State fully based on the rule of law. Lastly he thanked again the partners and expressed his personal wishes for the forthcoming year.

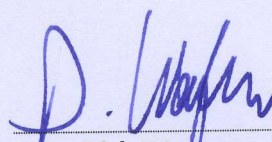
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**Minutes Approved by:**



Date: 16/3/2011

Ms. Sousada Phoummasak  
National Programme Director  
SELNA Joint Programme



Date: 16.3.2011

Mr. Dirk Wagener  
Head of Governance Unit  
UNDP

**ANNEXES:**

- Annex 1:** List of participants
- Annex 2:** Presentation on progress report, achievements for 2010 and resource Mobilization (Power Point)
- Annex 3:** Presentation on Work Plan 2011 (Power Point)