

Remarks by the UN RC, UNDP RR at the closing session of the

RTIM 2014, 14 November 2014

- Honourable Minister of Planning and Investment,
- Distinguished participants

I would like to express our sincere appreciation for the excellent organization of the meeting by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the entire team. I wish to also stress how pleased we were with the exceptionally productive dialogue with Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Your Excellency's Government. Our discussions were enriched with a presentation by the Saravane provincial government on our Round Table consultation in September, and by interventions from the National Assembly, NPA and INGO representatives as well as from the private sector.

With your agreement, I would like to share my observations of the key discussions and some recommendations arising from our today's dialogue.

Macro-economic management

- Continued coordinated management of macro-economic parameters is essential to sustain progress and build buffers to cope with shocks, including management of public debt and the level of external reserves. At the meeting, Development Partners suggested some possible

innovations for raising tax resources, including consistent application of policy to FDI projects. In addition, the meeting highlighted budget management as an area needing further improvement.

8th Plan preparation

- Development Partners commended the Government for adopting an outcome based approach based on the criteria for LDC graduation. They also welcomed the opportunity to continue to engage in consultations during the formulation of the Plan.
- The meeting also discussed industrial diversification, effective investment in infrastructure and prioritizing sustainability as critical aspects for ensuring quality and equitable growth. This particularly includes promoting green growth and addressing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Affordability of the plan was another key issue raised. Thus, any risks associated with financing of the plan, as well as the issue of data consistency and the application of relevant international standards are important elements to consider throughout the formulation of the next NSEDP.

Off-track MDGs and action plans

- Food and Nutrition Security: Development Partners congratulated the Government's excellent effort and on the progress of the convergence approach. Based on the outcomes from the Round Table Consultation held in Saravane, there is a need to ensure adequate funding of village level interventions, to further promote the multi stakeholder approach to

nutrition at the local level, and to acknowledge the importance of civil society engagement in addressing this very seriously off track MDG.

- Education: Development Partners welcomed overall the progress being made. However, meeting MDG 2 targets could be challenging. Therefore, the meeting urged for further investments in dealing with first year drop outs as well as the deployment of teachers from overserved to underserved communities.
- Health: The meeting highlighted progress made in the sector, and Development Partners appreciated the Government's excellent work in making immunization coverage and free MCH programmes successful. But in order to fully implement core health programmes, including the provision of more staff especially in underserved areas, more investments and support from relevant stakeholders will be required.
- Environment: Development Partners commended the Government's initiatives to carry out a forest cover assessment in 2015 and biodiversity assessments in National Protected Areas. At the meeting, it was also recommended that the Government consider setting more realistic targets for MDG 7 and prioritize sustainable management of natural resources in the 8th Plan, including addressing rigorously illegal logging and exports.
- Land: We are looking forward to the finalization of the National Land Policy and its approval by the National Assembly. In that context, Development Partners encouraged the Government to allow

expropriations only for public purposes, to ensure affected parties receive full, fair and prior compensation, both in cases of individually and communally held land, and to define policies and laws that recognize customary rights. The importance of the link between access to land and nutrition and food security should also be recognized.

- UXO: Development Partners welcomed recent efforts to address technical and capacity constraints to improve performance and encouraged early approval by the NRA Board of new survey and clearance methodologies, a new funding window for civil society, and structural and capacity enhancements.

Governance Reforms

- Improvements were recommended regarding the space for Civil Society, particularly in relation to the application of the new guidelines. It was suggested that the Governance Sector Working Group could host a regular forum between representatives of Civil Society, Government and Development Partners to advance an agreed application of the new guidelines and deal with other outstanding issues, including the enabling environment for Civil Society activities.
- In the case of Mr. Sombath, the Government stressed its continuing efforts and desire to resolve the case and provide updated information to the family and other interested parties.

- The meeting also discussed the progress of the UPR this year, and recommended establishing a mechanism for continuous review of the UPR recommendations and support of their implementation, including accession to the remaining HR conventions and provision of invitations to UN special rapporteurs.
- Efforts to ensure progress in governance and legal reforms should continue to receive support by Development Partners with various master plans and be regularly monitored. In respect of Sam Sang expansion, Development Partners welcomed the opportunity to review the Government's proposals and how best we can provide collective support to this important initiative.

Development cooperation for results

- Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan and Aid Management Platform: The Development Partners congratulated the Government on the completion of the VDCAP revision and survey this year. The findings of the survey should be reviewed together, and recommendations should be taken into account for implementation of the development effectiveness agenda at the country level while the country is also preparing for the 2015 global survey.
- In addition, statistical capacities and access to updated information are significant aspects of our work together and would benefit from more concerted support to enhance the capacity to generate and share this data.

There were the most significant points discussed during our sessions today. I believe addressing these issues will be challenging, but this still represents a very positive agenda for the coming year. I look forward to joining you all at next year's High Level Round Table Meeting to review the progress we have made.

Before ending my remarks, I would like to congratulate the Minister for his excellent and skillful management of today's proceeding, especially the interactive dialogue encouraged amongst us.

I would like to also thank the organizing team, especially the Department of International Cooperation (DIC) - Mdm. Sisomboun and her staff for their tireless effort in making this meeting a success.

Finally, I appreciate the value added by all distinguished participants, including the Vice Governor from Saravane province, members of Civil Society and the Private Sector as well as our colleagues from the Government.

Thank you very much.