

(Unofficial translation)



**Lao People's Democratic Republic
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity**

Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)

No. 2263/MPI.DIC-CSO.01
Vientiane Capital, December 8, 2021

To: Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, Chair of the Round Table Process (RTP) National Steering Committee with great respect,

Subject: Report of the successful 13th High-Level Round Table Meeting (HL-RTM) in 2021 on “Enhancing partnership to improve the effective implementation of the 9th five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) aiming to accelerate the country’s achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status in the mid of COVID-19 recovery.”

- Pursuant to the Prime Minister’s Decree No. 636/PM, dated November 26, 2021, on the Organisation and Function of the MPI;
- Pursuant to the Decree on Official Development Assistance (ODA) Management and Application No. 357, dated October 09, 2019;
- Pursuant to the Notice of the Prime Minister’s Office No. 243/PMO, dated March 15, 2021, on the Agreement for Organising the 13th HL-RTM in 2021;
- Pursuant to results of the 13th HL-RTM held on November 17, 2021.

Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) as the Deputy Chair and Standing Member of the RTP National Steering Committee is honor to inform you that: MPI in collaboration with the United Nations (UN) virtually hosted the 13th HL-RTM on **“Enhancing partnership to improve the effective implementation of the 9th five-year NSEDP aiming to accelerate the country’s achievement of the SDGs and graduation from the LDC status in the mid of COVID-19 recovery,”** on November 17, 2021. The meeting was officially opened by H.E. Mr. Phankham Viphavanh, the Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, along with comments shared by Mr. Achim Steiner, Vice-Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, UNDP Administrator, from New York, USA. After the opening session, H.E. Mr. Sonexay Siphandone, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Planning and Investment continued to be chaired the meeting together with his co-

chair, Ms. Sara Sekkenes, UN Resident Coordinator to the Lao PDR. The event was attended by 346 participants in total, comprising 251 Lao delegates and 95 foreign attendees. Results of the meeting were summarised as follows:

Part 1: Summary of Meeting

I. Objectives

The main objectives of the 13th HL-RTM were discussed the 9th NSEDP, including methods and mechanisms for implementing such a plan. The discussion was centred around the following points:

1. Discussed on the enhancement of compliance and cohesion of projects for national planning under the leadership of line ministries, with support from development partners and stakeholders involved;
2. Introduced and discussed the 9th NSEDP and prepared for developing the LDC Graduation Smooth Transition Strategy as well as the COVID-19 recovery plan;
3. Introduced projections on methods for implementing national priorities, particularly under the circumstance when Lao PDR is facing financial restriction;
4. Discussed the ODA effectiveness and efficiency, and mechanism for development coordination;
5. Discussed with all stakeholders involving on development challenges and opportunities.

➤ Points of discussion during the 13th HL-RTM were divided into 3 parts:

1. **Progress Report:** ‘Reviewing progress’ such as achievements and challenges on the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda according to progress towards SDGs , particularly the 2nd Voluntary National Review (VNR);
2. **National Planning:** ‘Future planning’ for the implementation of the 9th five-year NSEDP, particularly the preparation for developing the Financing Strategy for plans such as the COVID-19 recovery plan and the LDC Graduation Smooth Transition Strategy;
3. **Effective Development Cooperation:** ‘Defining methods’ through reviewing methods for improving effective development cooperation and a mid-term review of the Country Action Plan of the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (Vientiane Declaration) and progress of Sector Working Groups (SWGs) for working and discussing with development partners.

II. Discussion of Results and Comments during the Meeting:

Various topics were discussed throughout the meeting based on the agenda as summarised below:

1. 2nd VNR on the implementation of SDGs in 2021

- Elaborated development agendas into detailed action plans to be implemented at both central and local levels, to ensure its effectiveness of national development agendas, particularly the NSEDP, SDGs, LDC graduation, green growth, etc.;

- Paid attention to collaboration with line ministries, sectors and local authorities, while building capacity for incorporating SDGs into development plans at all levels ;
- Improved monitoring and reporting duties based on SDGs implementation statistics;
- Paid attention to building awareness, improving accessibility and ensuring understanding of SDGs and related indicators and projects that assist in SDGs incorporation among local communities throughout the country;
- Incorporated financial resources for the implementation of SDGs to achieve tangible outcomes in compliance with the current circumstance of financial restriction;
- COVID-19 recovery and adaptability to the New Normal yield substantial impacts upon the implementation of tasks that are closely associated with SDGs in the Lao PDR.

2. The 9th five-year NSEDP and methods for implementing the 5-year plan: monitoring and evaluating framework and Financing Strategy

- Paid attention to implementing prioritised policies agreed in unanimity in an important period for national development;
- Elaborated goals, objectives and priorities of the 9th 5-year plan into detailed action plans to be implemented at both central and local levels, including SDGs and smooth graduation from the LDC status were a vital task to ensure the accomplishment of
- Completed the Financing Strategy to support the implementation of the 9th NSEDP;
- Some sectors, particularly education and health, should have in-depth and detail revisions on sustainable development by applying low-carbon approach into project implementations;
- Conducted close monitoring and evaluation for implementing development plans was highly crucial to ensure the achievement of the outcomes;
- Information management is still a challenge, resulting policy creation and monitoring of policy practices was relatively slow;
- Contribution from the Private sector in planning and implementing the 9th NSEDP was still limited.

3. Results of the study on the COVID-19 recovery

- ❖ Financing resources for sustainable development and effective development cooperation (macro-finance framework).
 - Enhancing transparency in debt management;
 - Ensuring stability of the financial sector in a sustainable manner.
- ❖ **Trade, private and tourism sectors**
 - Improved business and investment environments to expedite processes, including enhancement of public-private partnership and dialogues;
 - Promoted economic integration within the regions;
 - Provided economic assistance for tourism recovery backs to their normal operations;
 - Provided support to small and medium-sized farming groups during the COVID-19 pandemic;

- Developed an e-commerce policy framework;
- Created a special supporting system for women, especially for those who were in unstable employment status due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ❖ **Change management and enhancing policy promptness for and creating job stability.**
 - Strengthened societies by enabling them to resume their business operations, created and enforced national policies and regulations on wage, workers and labour migration management as well as border & checkpoints must be well-coordinated to ensure labour workers management is compliance with the best international standard and practice;
 - Strengthened social protection system to handle impacts through involvement with all sectors, continued offering necessary services by focusing on vulnerable groups who suffer from the impacts;
 - Promoted the strengthening of the public-private partnership in terms of digital skill development, employment service and labour market information for employment;
 - Strengthened the implementation of the employment promotion strategy at local levels, particularly in remote areas to ensure food security and stable income, facilitated stable jobs access, and improved adaptability to climate change;
 - Ensured small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at the local levels benefited from their investments in different areas, including employment and labour migration.
- ❖ Human resource development
 - Education:**
 - It was recommended to re-open school and to resume teaching & learning with preventive measures and solve learning loss opportunities due to school closure, in particular, supporting disadvantage groups with regard to low enrolment and high drop-out rates, while securing budget for the sector;
 - Continued to develop new teaching & learning models for primary education, especially the incorporation of digital skills into basic and higher education;
 - Set quotas for teacher recruitment based on the actual demand nationwide;
 - Enhanced the pre-school education, school condition preparedness, and mitigated the drop-out rate, while ensuring quality and effective education;
 - Support teachers' training programmes to transfer knowledge gained to students in an effective manner.
 - Health:**
 - Strengthened immunity to the healthcare system against the COVID-19 pandemic, while providing support to societies and individuals to ensure their adaptability to the actual situation;
 - Strengthened primary healthcare by arranging systematical healthcare services and built capacity for treating persons with acute malnutrition;
 - Ensured provision of necessary health services in a regular manner, while providing assistance on family planning and nutrition;

- Enhanced capacity building for health personnel to be able to effectively handle emergency cases, while ensuring sustainable and adaptive quality in the basic health service system;
- Strengthened financial sustainability in the health sector while ensuring equal access to health services.

Gender equality:

- Promoted investments in female labours to boost equality by coming up with plans to support gender equality and to prevent violence against women, including the mitigation of conflicts in sectors that is de-important to all women;
 - Improved accessibility to the social welfare system, childcare services and maternity policy;
 - Utilised gender-disaggregated data in a systematic and regular manner.
- ❖ Green growth, adaptability and risk management
- Green growth that aims to lower the carbon emission in business operations, to support transition towards clean energy, to promote consumptions of green renewable energy, to promote the budget disbursement on nature-friendly activities, to promote sustainable waste management, to support basic infrastructure and green industrialisation, and seek for green finance to support SMEs;
 - Investment in local communities is required to contribute to protection of the ecosystem, biodiversity and wildlife, to promote more rights among women, and to develop immunity for communities against risks associated with natural disasters and climate change, to strengthen the private sector, to invest in the supply chain and build resilient basic infrastructure, and to promote resilient agriculture activities to adapt to climate change and sustainability, while considering solutions for natural protection;
 - Financial resources were required to help manage risks from natural disasters; such financial resources could be allocated in dealing with climate change; strengthened and incorporated disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptability into ministerial work plans; utilised statistical data to define risks; implemented measures for mitigating air pollution and improving the air quality; render policy support to mitigate disaster risks and provided capacity building for societies to be able to handle with natural disasters and to engage in agricultural activities; and to improve financial risk management;

4. LDC Graduation Smooth Transition Strategy

- Solved problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, while following up on progress to achieve 03 criteria for LDC graduation, namely: Human Assets Index, Gross National Income and Economic Vulnerability Index, to ensure such graduation is sustainable and at least to achieve at a expected level by the end of the graduation timeframe.
- The 9th NSEDP anticipated the Government would develop the LDC Graduation Smooth Transition Strategy via discussion with all stakeholders involved.

- Ensured the phase-out of LDC privilege did not obstruct Lao national development. In the meantime, such privilege should be optimised during the preparatory period to warrant Lao PDR is in the most proper position when graduating from the status. This includes: capacity-building in production, negotiation and trade agreement, and investment in human resources development in order to help diversify the economy, while ensuring its sustainability.

5. Assess effectiveness and efficiency of development cooperation via a mid-term review of the Country Action Plan of the Vientiane Declaration and the progress of SWGs for working and discussing with development partners.

- Implemented the Vientiane Declaration based on mutual understanding, transparency and high sense of responsibility by involvement of related stakeholders;
- Accessed 8 principles under the Vientiane Declaration on effective partnership development is crucial, It was necessary to ensure participations from all sectors (Government, development partners, the private sector, CSOs and so on). Therefore, a mechanism for monitoring and reporting the implementation of such declaration in a regular and comprehensive manner is required;
- Maximised aid effectiveness in the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration on effective partnership development to boost aid effectiveness in implementing the 8th NSEDP (2016-2020) and the 9th NSEDP (2021-2025);
- Government and development partners promised to enhance efforts in implementing and achieving 14 targets that were currently on halfway -by the end. Some targets have been progressed well, while some need further attention;
- The implementation of the Vientiane Declaration must be improved because the plan served as a learning tool that needs to be adjusted based on uncertainties;
- The implementation of the Vientiane Declaration was linked with international principles for effective development. With this, it is recommended to have a monitoring mechanism to help define important outcomes that contribute to the discussion on development cooperation and preparation for a high-level meeting on international cooperation for effective development;
- It is a must to ensure unanimous understanding between the RTP Secretariat and reporting agencies;
- It is necessary to strengthen the capacity for agencies in coordinating and implementing their duties, as some sectors are still having difficulties in communication with each other. Thus, the capacity of such sectors should be assessed.

Part 2: Directions for Translating Meeting Results

Proposed to line ministries/related sectors, local authorities and development partners to translate results of the 13th HL-RTM into detailed plans to be implemented successfully based on the following priorities introduced during the meeting:

1. Assigned the MPI to take lead in collaborating with the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), and other line ministries/related sectors, local authorities and all parties involved with a special focus on:

- Implementing nationally prioritised policies agreed in unanimity in an important period for national development;
- Transforming goals, objectives and priorities of the 9th five-year plan into detailed action plans to be implemented at both central and local levels to ensure that the plan is achieved, including SDGs and smooth graduation from the LDC status;
- Putting all efforts in completing the Financing Strategy to support the implementation of the 9th NSEDP;
- Urging line ministries and relevant sectors, namely education and health, to pay more attention to review projects and to consider incorporating low-carbon sustainable development practices into project implementations;
- Monitoring and evaluating the implementation progress of development plans to ensure the tangible realisation of its outcomes;
- Managing information that associated with the policy creation, and monitoring the implementation progress of such policy in an effective and efficient manner;
- Ensuring the openness for private contribution in the process of planning and implementing the 9th NSEDP.

2. Assign the MoFA to collaborate with the MPI and line ministries/concerned sectors, local authorities and all parties involved with a special focus on:

2.1. 2nd VNR on the implementation of SDGs:

- Paid attention to transforming development agendas into detailed action plans to be implemented at both central and local levels to ensure its effective realisation of national development agendas, particularly the NSEDP, SDGs, LDG graduation, green growth, etc.;
- Paid attention to collaboration with line ministries, sectors and local authorities, while building capacity for incorporating SDGs into a development plan at all levels;
- Paid attention to improving the planning, monitoring and reporting duties based on statistics for SDGs implementation;
- Paid attention to raising awareness, improving accessibility and ensuring understanding related to SDGs and relevant indicators and projects to assist in incorporating SDGs into a development plan at all levels among local communities throughout the country;
- Paid attention to incorporating financial resources for the implementation of SDGs - to achieve tangible outcomes in compliance with the current circumstance of financial restriction;
- Put all efforts in the COVID-19 recovery and adaptability to the New Normal in order to help facilitate the implementation of tasks closely associated with SDGs in the Lao PDR.

2.2. LDC Graduation Smooth Transition Strategy development:

- Paid attention to address issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, while following up progress for achieving 03 criteria for LDC graduation, namely: Human Assets Index, Gross National Income and Economic Vulnerability Index, to ensure sustainable graduation and achievements at least at an expected level by the end of the timeframe.
 - Put all efforts in developing the LDC Graduation Smooth Transition Strategy by discussing with all parties involved as stipulated in the 9th NSEDP;
 - Ensured Lao PDR was in the best position in graduation from the LDC status. This includes: capacity-building in production, negotiation and trade agreement, and investment in human resources development in order to help diversify the economy, while ensuring its sustainability.
- 3. Assigned the MPI to collaborate with the MoF, National Institute for Economic Research (NIER), Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC), Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MoLS), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Ministry of Health (MoH), other relevant ministries/sectors, local authorities and all parties involved with a special focus on:**
- ❖ Financing resources for sustainable development and effective development cooperation
 - Enhancing transparency in debt management and ensuring stability for the financial sector in a sustainable manner.
 - ❖ **Trade, private and tourism sector**
 - Improving business and investment environments to expedite its process while enhancing the public-private partnerships and dialogues on a regular basis;
 - Promoting the economic integration with countries and within the region;
 - Providing and mobilising financial support to tourism recover to the normal stage;
 - Providing support to small and medium-sized farming groups during the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - Developing an e-commerce policy framework to facilitate online business operation;
 - Creating a special supporting system for, especially unemployed women affected by the COVID-19.
 - ❖ **Managing changes and increasing policy preparedness for stable job creation**
 - Paid attention to strengthen society by enabling them to resume their business operation; creating and enforcing national policies and regulations on wage, workers and labour migration management; border & checkpoints must coordinate each other to ensure labor management complied with the best international standards and practices;
 - Paid attention to strengthen the social protection system to respond to impacts by allowing all sectors to openly participate in the system; Continued to offer necessary services by focusing on vulnerable groups who were affected;

- Paid attention to strengthen and improve the public-private partnerships in terms of better digital skill development, employment services and labour market information for employment;
- Paid attention to strengthen the implementation of an employment promotion strategy at the local level, particularly in remote areas, ensuring food security, stable income & jobs and improve adaptability to climate change;
- Paid attention to ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) at the local level will benefit from the investment in various areas, including employment and labour migration.

❖ Human resource development

Education:

- Considered to re-open schools with preventive measures, and to address learning loss opportunities due to previous school closure. In particular, disadvantage groups for low enrolment and high drop-out rates, while securing sufficient budget for the education sector;
- Continued developing new teaching-learning models for primary education in alignment with the New Normal lifestyles, especially the incorporation of digital skills into basic and higher education;
- Considered increasing quotas for teacher recruitments based on the actual demand throughout the country;
- Enhanced pre-school education and school preparedness, mitigated the drop-out rate, while ensuring the quality and effective education;
- Paid attention to support teacher's training that transfer knowledge gained to students in an effective manner.

Health:

- Paid attention to strengthen immunity in the health sector against the COVID-19 pandemic, while providing support to society and individuals to ensure their adaptability to the actual situation;
- Paid attention to strengthen primary healthcare by arranging a more systematic healthcare service and building capacity for treating persons with acute malnutrition;
- Ensured the provision of mandatory health services in a regular manner, while providing assistance in family and nutrition planning;
- Paid attention to capacity building for health personnel to be able to effectively handle emergency cases, while ensuring the provision of basic health services in a sustainable and quality manner;
- Strengthened and ensured stable financing towards the health sector, while ensuring equal access to health services.

Gender equality:

- Promote investment in female labour workers to boost equality by coming up with a plan to support gender equality and prevent violence against women, including the mitigation of conflicts in sectors that do not pay enough attention to women and girls;
- Improve access to the social welfare system, childcare services, maternity policy and so on;
- Promote the usage of gender-disaggregated data in a systematic manner.
- ❖ Green growth, adaptability and risk management
 - Paid attention to decrease the carbon emission in business operation, support the transition towards clean energy, promote the consumption of green renewable energy, promote the budget on nature-friendly activities, promote sustainable waste management, support basic infrastructure and green industrialisation, and seek for green finance to support SMEs;
 - Increased investment in local communities in protecting the ecosystem, biodiversity and wildlife; promoting more rights among women and developing immunity for the communities against risks associated with natural disasters and climate change; strengthening the private sector; investing in the supply chain and building resilient basic infrastructure; and promoting resilient agriculture activities to respond to climate change and sustainability, while utilising solutions that emphasise on the natural protection;
 - Promoted a disaster risk management system; ensured accessibility to financial resources for dealing with climate change; strengthened and incorporated disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptability into ministerial and sectoral work plans; applied research data to define risks; implemented measures for mitigating air pollution and improving the air quality; rendered policy support to mitigate disaster risks and built capacity for society to cope with natural disasters and engaged in agricultural activities; and improved financial risk management;

4. Assigned the MPI to take the lead in collaborating with line ministries, sectors, local authorities and all parties involved with a particular focus on:

- Implementing the Vientiane Declaration based on comprehensive mutual understanding, transparency and a high sense of responsibility by parties involved;
- Ensure participation from all parties involved in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of progress associated with eight principles under the Vientiane Declaration, particularly the Government, development partners, the private sector, CSOs, etc. In addition, a mechanism for monitoring and reporting the implementation of the declaration regularly and comprehensively is required;
- Maximising aid effectiveness through the implementation of the Vientiane Declaration to support the implementation of the 9th NSEDP (2021-2025);
- Enhancing the implementation and ensuring the achievement of 14 targets under the Country Action Plan of the Vientiane Declaration as planned, with a special

concentration on a mechanism improvement for monitoring and reporting the implementation of the plan to guarantee its alignment with the actual situation and international principles for development cooperation, while contributing to the preparation for a high-level meeting on international cooperation for effective development;

- Strengthening and ensuring mutual understanding in terms of coordination, reporting and capacity assessment for the RTP National Steering Committee Secretariat and sectors involved in a discussion with development partners;

Therefore, this report was made for acknowledgement and served as a reference for the Prime Minister's Office to translate the 13th HL-RTM results into a detailed notice for effective and efficient implementation (draft notice is attached herewith).

Thus, this report was made for acknowledgement and proper consideration.

Deputy Prime Minister
Minister

Signed and Sealed

Sonexay Siphandone