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## **National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21\***

### **Lao People's Democratic Republic**

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## **I. Methodology**

### **A. Drafting process**

1. This Report is drafted in accordance with the guidelines of Resolution 60/251 dated 15 March 2006 of the UN General Assembly, Resolution 5/1 dated 18 June 2007 and Decision 17/119 dated 19 June 2011 of the UN Human Rights Council to review the promotion and protection of human rights in the Lao PDR.

2. This Report focuses on the implementation of the UPR recommendations which are fully and partially supported by the Lao PDR from the first cycle of the review and the progress generally made in the promotion and protection of human rights in the Lao PDR. The Report also highlights the challenges and constraints the Lao PDR faced since the last review and the priorities and commitments of the country to enhance the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Lao multi-ethnic people.

### **B. Consultation process**

3. The Lao National Steering Committee on Human Rights which was established by the Lao Government in 2012, consisted of high level officials of Government ministries, other state organizations, representatives of mass organizations, has played a central role in the preparation of this Report (the composition of the Committee appears as Annex 1). The Committee organized workshops to raise awareness and understanding of the UPR mechanism and recommendations, and a series of consultations in the drafting process for this Report with the participation of representatives of state organizations at the central and local levels, mass organizations, civil society organizations, members of the diplomatic community, representatives of UN agencies, other international organizations, and international non-governmental organizations based in the Lao PDR. Towards the finalization of this Report, specific consultations with CSOs (NPAs) and with Development Partners and INGOs were organized on 8 October 2014 and on 20 October 2014 respectively to collect views and inputs from these stakeholders on the draft Report.

### **C. Progress of recommendations implementation from the first cycle**

4. As a result of the first cycle review, of the total of 107 recommendations the Lao PDR fully accepted 71 recommendations, partially accepted 15 recommendations while 21 recommendations were not supported. Immediately after the completion of the first cycle review, the Lao Government had attached importance to the follow up on the supported recommendations. The National Report, the Outcome Report and all recommendations from the first cycle have been translated into the Lao language, published and distributed among government officials and stakeholders and the general public. The Government has assigned line-ministries and state organizations concerned to implement the UPR recommendations related to their respective roles and functions in collaboration with stakeholders. UPR recommendations are directly or indirectly implemented through the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP), the MDGs, various laws, national policies, strategies, programmes and projects with achievements have been progressively made which contribute to the enhancement of the promotion and protection of human rights of the Lao people.

## **D. The constitutional and legal framework to promote and protect human rights**

5. The recognition of and the respect for human value and dignity in Laos dates back to its ancient history. King Fangum who led the Lao people in establishing the Lane Xang kingdom in 1353 gave his teachings to the Lao people for them to embrace the values of love and kindness, solidarity and respect for human dignity. Especially, the king emphasized the proportionate punishment for an offence committed; the prohibition of slavery; the discouragement of fight for property that cause loss to human life. The struggles of the Lao people against the foreign domination and occupation, for the national liberation and independence in the following centuries and the implementation of the two strategic tasks to safeguard and develop the country during the period from the national independence to the present time always have had the ultimate goal of enabling the Lao multi-ethnic people to live in lasting peace and prosperity which are conditions for them to fully enjoy their human rights.

6. The Lao PDR is a people's democratic state. All powers belong to the people, and are exercised by the people and for the interests of the multi-ethnic people. The State protects the freedoms and democratic rights of the people. All acts of bureaucratism and harassment detrimental to the people's honor, physical well-being, lives, consciences and property are prohibited.

7. Political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Lao multi-ethnic people are enshrined in the national Constitution in consistence with the human rights obligations and commitments of the Lao PDR at the regional and international levels. The constitutional provisions are being materialized in various laws adopted by the National Assembly and other legal instruments. Many laws and other legal instruments have specific objectives of the promotion and protection of human rights (the list of laws adopted by the National Assembly and other related legal instruments appears as Annex 3).

8. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to governance, public administration and the rule of law, the Lao PDR has continued to improve its governance and public administration to be more effective, transparent, accountable, participatory and to provide better services to the people. Moreover, the Lao Government has set its vision to build the Lao PDR to be a state governed by the rule of law by 2020 which is being realized through the implementation of the Master Plan on the Development of the Rule of Law adopted by the Lao Government since 2009. As one of the main components of the Master Plan, the National Assembly has drawn up a 5 year legislative plan (2011-2015) with more than 90 laws set to be adopted or amended, including, most importantly, the amendment of the Constitution, in order to meet the current and future needs of the national socio-economic development. In making the governance and public administration to be more transparent and accountable, the Lao Government attaches importance to the prevention and combating corruption, focusing on the dissemination and implementation of the Law on Anti Corruption (adopted in 2005 and amended in 2012), other relevant laws and legal instruments, including the Decree on Assets Declaration of Government Officials and the UN Convention Against Corruption among government officials and civil servants at all levels and the general public. At present, the Lao Government is implementing the "3 Builds Directives" namely build province to be strategic unit; build district to be comprehensively strong unit; and build village to be development unit, with a view to strengthening capacity and clearly defining responsibilities of local administration of different levels.

## **E. Accession to human rights conventions**

9. The Lao Government attaches importance to the implementation of UPR recommendations related to accession to, implementation of and reporting under human rights conventions. At present, the Lao PDR is a party to 7 core human rights conventions, namely International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT). The latter convention was signed and ratified by the Lao PDR following the first cycle of the UPR review. In addition, the Lao PDR is a party to the Optional Protocols to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. The Lao PDR signed Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED) in 2008 and in follow up on the relevant UPR recommendations, the country has begun the preparation for its early ratification. The Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Family Members (CMW) is also being studied for future accession. As for the optional protocols on individual complaints, although the Lao PDR did not support the relevant recommendations, the country however is studying them thoroughly, but at this stage will focus on improving national mechanisms as this involves exhaustion of domestic remedies. Besides the core human rights conventions, the Lao PDR is a party to other conventions related to the promotion and protection of human rights (the list of core human rights conventions and other conventions related to human rights to which the Lao PDR is party appears as Annex 3).

10. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations concerning national incorporation of human rights treaty obligations, the Lao PDR has adopted legislative measures on the incorporation and implementation of its obligations under the human rights conventions. In the law making process, treaty obligations are taken into consideration and in case of conflict between treaty obligation and national legislation, the treaty obligation prevails as per the Presidential Ordinance on Treaty Formulation, Accession and Implementation of 2009. This approach has been strengthened in the Law on Law Making adopted by the National Assembly in 2012.

11. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations concerning reporting obligations under human rights treaties, the Lao PDR submitted its 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> combined periodic reports under ICERD to the UNCERD Committee in 2011 and participated in the session of the Committee in which it considered the Lao PDR's reports in Geneva in 2012. During this period, the Lao PDR also submitted 2 sub-reports concerning violence against women and women migrant workers to the UNCEDAW Committee, the reports under the CRC's two Optional Protocols to the UN CRC Committee. As for the overdue reports under ICCPR, ICESCR and CRPD, the Lao PDR is set to finalize the reports in the near future while preparation work on initial or periodic reporting under other treaties such as CAT, CEDAW and CRC has also started.

## **F. Dissemination and capacity building on human rights**

12. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations pertinent to capacity building on human rights, the Lao Government pays attention to disseminate human rights obligations of the Lao PDR and develop capacity of government officials and stakeholders. Seminars, workshops and training courses on human rights were organized for different target audiences including government officials at the central and local levels, members of the National Assembly, judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, mass and civil

society organizations, as well as law students. In the dissemination and capacity building efforts, the Lao PDR receives cooperation and support from development partners under bilateral and multilateral frameworks, especially the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights Regional Office (OHCHR), UNDP, Finland and EU through the then International Law Project; UNDP, EU, France and US through the current Support Programme to Legal Sector Master Plan; Australia through the Human Rights Project at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the area of the rights of women and children, the Lao PDR received cooperation and technical assistance from development partners including UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, World Bank and some diplomatic missions to the Lao PDR. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare received support from the International Labour Organization in the study and dissemination of ILO conventions to which the Lao PDR is party. Bilateral initiatives of cooperation with the British Embassy and the EU Delegation in Vientiane to support capacity building on human rights for Lao officials are under discussion with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **G. Bilateral, regional and international human rights cooperation**

13. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to international cooperation on human rights, the Lao PDR has been involved in the frameworks of the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of UN General Assembly by attending meetings, making statements, co-sponsoring of various resolutions. The Lao Government extended its goodwill cooperation in providing information and clarification to the HRC special procedures and other mechanisms on particular cases or issues concerning the promotion and protection of human rights in the Lao PDR. In the follow up on the UPR recommendations related to inviting special rapporteurs to visit the country, the Lao Government is currently preparing for such visits by organizing seminars to raise awareness and understanding of the roles and functions of the special procedures among Government officials and stakeholders. The Lao PDR plans to invite the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing to visit the country in the near future and will consider inviting other Special Rapporteurs on a case by case basis.

14. The Lao PDR has contributed to the development of human rights in ASEAN in terms of institutional building and standard setting. The Lao PDR actively participates in the work of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), and the ASEAN Committee on Migrant Workers (ACMW). The Lao PDR has contributed to the drafting of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Children, among other regional human rights instruments. At the moment, the Lao PDR participates in the drafting process for an ASEAN Instrument on Migrant Workers and an ASEAN Convention on Anti-Human Trafficking. Under the AICHR framework, the Lao PDR is leading in the conduct of Thematic Studies on the Right to Peace, the Right to Education and the Right to Health. By the end of 2014, the Lao PDR will host a Regional Workshop on Comparative Human Rights Law Studies in ASEAN to share lessons and experiences among the countries in the region on the domestication of their human rights obligations.

15. At the bilateral level, the Lao Government has human rights dialogue with the EU and Australia, and has exchanges on human rights with other countries to promote better understanding, share good practices and experiences on human rights implementation, with an aim to contributing to the further enhancement of bilateral relations and cooperation.

## **II. Implementation of human rights in various areas**

### **A. Economic, social and cultural rights**

#### **1. Development and poverty reduction**

16. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations concerning socio-economic development and poverty reduction, the Lao Government has made poverty reduction a priority in the national socio-economic development to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015 and to graduate the country from the LDC status in 2020. The Government has been implementing the 7<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP) (2011–2015) with results have been progressively made. The country has maintained political stability, social order and safety, sustained economic growth, thus lifting the living standard of the people. In the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP to date Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has recorded at about 8.0% per annum and income per capita reached 1,534.00 US dollars in 2013. In the national development, the Lao Government has been striving to realize the 4 breakthroughs: (1) breakthrough in imagination, (2) breakthrough in human resources development, (3) breakthrough in improving management and governance regulations, and (4) breakthrough in poverty reduction. At the moment, the Lao Government is in the process of formulating the 8<sup>th</sup> five-year NSEDP for the period 2016–2020 with an emphasis on poverty eradication, equity growth, human resource development and other priorities built upon the achievements made in the implementation of the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and the MDGs.

17. The Lao Government has been implementing various projects related to development and poverty eradication. In 2013 the Government provided permanent residences and allocated land for people in 7,386 villages or 86.15% of the total number of villages. In 2013, 9 more districts graduated from poverty, meaning the number of poor districts dropped to 30 districts or 20.27% of the total 148 districts nationwide. In the country, there are 1,966 poor villages or 23.09% of the total 8,514 villages, a decrease of 325 poor villages from the previous year. At present in the Lao PDR there are 3,095 development villages or 36.35% of the total number of villages, an increase of 742 from the previous year. 7,174 villages or 84.26% of the total number of villages have road access all year round, an increase of 231 villages from the previous year. Of the total 1,138,278 families in the country, 92,328 families are classified as poor amounting to 8.11%, while 808,422 families are classified as development families covering 71.02%. This reflects the already attainment of the poverty reduction target of reducing poor families to less than 10% as per the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. The percentage of people living in poverty has declined from 27% in 2008 to 20.5% in 2014. The Government has set a target to further reduce poor families to 7.11% and the people living in poverty to less than 19% in 2015.

18. Despite the fact that in 2013 rice production was affected by natural disasters which caused damage to cultivation land of up to 53,700 hectares, the country managed to harvest 2 million tons of rice. The production of manufacturing industry and handicrafts has increased in fiscal year 2012–2013 making a revenue of 5,032 trillion Kip, an increase of 29.12% compared to fiscal year 2011–2012. Electricity production also increased in fiscal year 2012–2013. The total electric power generated was 13,668.04 million kwh, an increase of 11% compared to the previous year. In the country 6,266 villages or 74.77% of all villages are electrified while more than 87% households have access to electricity.

19. The Lao Government has paid attention to the implementation of the MDGs in support of the realization of the national development targets set in the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. To date, most of the MDGs targets have been achieved by the Lao PDR. In 2010, the Lao PDR was named by the UN as one of the exemplary countries in the implementation of the MDGs from low level of progress to making gradual achievements. The Lao PDR has submitted 3

MDG reports with the third report was submitted in 2013. While many of the MDG targets have been achieved or are on track to be achieved, certain MDG targets in the areas of nutrition, gender equality in primary education, reduction of maternal and child mortality, environment and UXO clearance are off track and more work remains to be done to achieve them by the end of the 2015.

20. The Lao PDR is the most heavily bombed country in the world and therefore MDG9 on the reduction of the impact of UXO in the Lao PDR was specifically created for the country. Four decades after the end of Indochina UXO continues to pose a major humanitarian threat, a significant obstacle to the development of the country. From 1964 to 2008, there were more than 50,000 casualties as victims of UXOs. The National UXO survey in 2008 estimated that there were 300 casualties as UXO victims per year. From 2010 to 2012 the National Regulatory Authority recorded 175 UXO incidents in Lao PDR, involving 247 people. UXO limits Lao people to enjoy their basic human rights, especially safe access to agriculture and cultivation land. Since 1966 UXO has destroyed over 44,000 hectares of land. In 2011–2012 about 6,000 hectares were cleared. However, to date only less than 2 per cent of affected areas have been cleared. This problem has delayed and added costs to a wide range of development projects. The Government has set a target of 20,000 hectares to be cleared by 2015. The Government also intends to expand and increase the pace of survey and clearance of UXOs in the Lao PDR as one of priorities to be included in the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.

## **2. The right to work**

21. The right to work and just working conditions is guaranteed in the Constitution and laws. The close tripartite cooperation (the government, workers' organization and employers' organization) has brought about significant progress in ensuring the right to work and decent working conditions for the people in reality. The legal framework for the realization of this right has been strengthened. During the period from the first cycle of the review of the UPR to the present time, the Law on Social Security was enacted, the Law on Labour was amended, the Decree on minimum wage for private, production and service sectors and the Decree on the establishment administration of the employment enterprise were adopted, among other legislative developments. In addition, the National Plan of Action on the elimination of worst forms of child labour, the Ministerial Decision on the organization and activities of labour inspection officials, the National Plan of Action to implement the ILO Decent Work Programme (2011–2015) were also adopted and put into implementation. The Lao PDR is party to 9 ILO conventions of which 5 conventions are from the list of the 8 fundamental conventions. The tripartite collaboration has also focused on building and improving the basic infrastructure for the labour skills development and vocational training. As a result, there are 163 labour skills development and vocational training centers across the nation, of which 60 centers are run by the Government, 13 centers are under mass organizations management and 90 centers are under private enterprise-production units. Learning and teaching methods and curricula have been improved to meet the labour market's demands. With the cooperation of international organizations, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has established labour standards in 17 professions, improved labour skills for 148,425 workers, of which 66,425 were females. The Ministry has approved the establishment of 15 recruitment and employment companies, 1 recruitment and employment service center, 9 employment information centers in 9 provinces and in Vientiane Capital. As a result of the effort by the Government 181,521 workers of whom 86,479 females have received employment within the country and abroad.

22. The Lao Federation of Trade Unions has the roles and functions to protect the rights and legitimate interests of the working people. The Union consists of 4 organizational levels: central, provincial, district, and grassroots levels. The Union has a total of 210,419

members, of whom 94,286 female. The Union runs 2 labour skills development centers. With the assistance of the Lao Trade Union collective labour contracts have been created in 380 labour units and the Union aims to accomplish 500 units by 2015.

### **3. Right to education**

23. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the right to education, the Lao Government has focused on the reform in the national education sector, aiming at enhancing the human resource development, accelerating the expansion of opportunities for access to education for all, promoting education quality, improving and elevating the level of education service, administrating education in a more appropriate manner. All this is being undertaken on the basis of people's participation, the promotion of vocational education, the uniqueness of the Lao national culture and educators' role. The aforementioned reform is divided into two phases: Phase 1 from 2006–2010 aiming at reforming the general education sector of both State and private owned institutions; Phase 2 from 2011–2015 aiming at reforming the vocational education and higher-level education.

24. The Government attaches importance to creating opportunities for Lao citizens in both urban and rural remote areas to have better access to education of various levels as guaranteed by the Law on Education. In academic year of 2013–2014 the enrolment of children at the age of 5 averages at 60.8%, an increase of 7.9% from the previous year and is considered as achieving the Education For All (EFA) goal which was set for the year 2015.

25. Every year, the Ministry of Education and Sports issues Ministerial guidelines on the allocation of students and staff to continue their studies by giving priority for receiving government grants to those who are from the poorest districts, especially women, members of ethnic groups and the disadvantaged considering the actual needs of the socio-economic development of the respective districts. Furthermore, priority has been given to the selection of those who wish to study in the field of education from the 3 Builds' target villages and from schools that lack teaching staff the most. Over the past years, the National University of Laos has organized human resource development programmes for 56 Districts.

26. The education network has been expanded. In the country in academic year 2013–2014 there are 6,861 primary schools, 1,620 lower and upper secondary schools; 71 higher educational institutions. In the implementation of the UPR recommendation on human rights education, the national education sector has included the subject of the rights of the child under the international Convention on the Right of the Child into school curriculum. Moreover, activities have been organized to promote the rights of the child and promote an inclusive learning, to enable children to express themselves and be creative in solving problems on their own. Many teachers and students of law schools in the country benefited from the human rights training course organized by the then International Law Project in 2010, 2011 and 2013.

### **4. Right to treatment and healthcare**

27. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the public health sector, the Lao PDR has continued to implement the policies to improve the general health of the people in the direction of disease prevention as the main policy and treatment as an important policy. The public health network has been expanded along with capacity building of doctors and nurses at various levels each year, widening access to basic healthcare for the people and with better quality. Life expectancy reaches 69 years. The public healthcare network has been further improved and expanded from the central to local levels including remote areas covering 98% of the total villages in the country which includes the provision of the village medical kits in remote areas. In the country, there were

923 healthcare centers in 2013 which have now increased to 964 centers as recorded in the first half of the year 2014. During 2013–2014 there was a total of 19,429 healthcare staff. Health insurance system, free of charge baby delivery service scheme and free health treatment for children under 5 years old scheme were implemented in 77 districts and 557 healthcare centers. The Healthcare Fund for the poor has been expanded across the nation. In 2013, all the members of the healthcare insurance made up 30% of the total population. The rate of baby delivery with medical personnel's assistance was 58%, infant mortality rate has reduced to 54.2 per 1000 new born babies, rate of mortality of children under 5 years old has dropped to 72.1 per 1000 children, maternal mortality rate has dropped to 220 per 100,000. Over the recent years, there were 15% of the children born with below standard weight, 44% of the children suffered from malnutrition, the rate of breast feeding from birth to 6 months was 40%; the rate of vaccination and immunization was 85%; the rate of clean water usage was 82.48%; 62.57% households and 59.82% schools have proper toilet facilities.

28. The Government attaches importance on the prevention of various contagious diseases such as prevention of malaria. The Government has given out 411,940 units of medicinally coted mosquito nets, reaching to 1,148,141 people across the country; 34,602 suspected cases of tuberculosis disease have been treated and the success rate of the treatment was recorded at 92% in the year 2011; in the year 2013 the number of people who used the service of HIV testing was 39,012 people of which 679 people tested positive for HIV, 353 people have AIDS and 104 have died. However, the public healthcare sector has managed to contain the infection and spread of AIDS to a very low level of 0.2% of the total population and 0.4% of the groups at risk. People with HIV/AIDS are entitled to fair protection and just treatment in accordance with the Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention. The public health sector was able to control the spreading of dengue in central and local hospitals. Moreover, the Government has concentrated on monitoring and prevention of the spreading of the avian flu and its new variant H1N1 and has been cautiously monitoring Ebola.

## **5. Cultural rights**

29. The Lao Government's policy in the cultural sphere is prescribed in the Constitution and laws such as the Law on National Heritages, the Law on Tourism, Prime Ministerial Decree on National Artists and other legislations which are aimed at promoting cultural development and the cultural rights of the Lao people. The Government restores, protects and enhances the cultures with national characteristics, as well as pays attention to eliminating backward traditions which are detrimental to the fine traditions and culture of the nation. The Government encourages national literature and fine arts of both professionals and amateurs from the central to local levels, organizes art competitions, cultural festivals displaying national and ethnic cultures including literature and art of ethnic groups on special occasions such as during the Lao, Hmong, Khmu, other ethnic groups' new years, boat racing festivals, That Luang festival, among others. The Government has awarded the titles of national and eminent artists to those who significantly contributed towards the cultural development. As of 2014 the country has 682,803 cultural families and 3,351 cultural villages. The Government always attaches importance to the management of the historical or cultural national heritages while in the country there are two UNESCO world heritage sites, namely, Luang Prabang and Vat Phu Champasak.

## **6. Right to adequate housing**

30. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the rural development, the Lao Government has been implementing the relocation policy to ensure permanent residences and employment for the people. People's relocation in the Lao PDR happens because of two main reasons: (1) due to personal reasons meaning either a person

or family proposing for the relocation in accordance with the constitutional right to freedom of movement and residence; (2) due to government relocation programs which means moving of the people from their original residence to new arranged settlement. The Government relocation programs include the grouping of small scattered villages in the remote mountainous areas into newly established cluster villages in order to provide villagers with ease of access to development, access to various government services, and also include the relocation of people affected by development projects. As for those who are affected by development projects, the Government has policies and legislation in place to ensure that they receive appropriate compensation and assistance towards their livelihoods.

31. The Government attaches importance to arranging land for housing and production for the people, including the allocation of forest land to be under the management and protection by the local people. At the moment, the Lao PDR is focusing on formulating a national land policy with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment being the core agency in this task with the participation of the relevant government agencies including the National Assembly and other stakeholders. Compensation and assistance to the people affected by development projects is clearly stipulated in the Law on Land, the Decree on implementation of the Law on Land, the Decree on compensation and relocation of people affected by development projects, and other legal documents issued by the Government and by the responsible Ministries.

32. The Government always ensures that people have their voice in the national development including the implementation of the relocation policy. Prior to undertaking large development projects consultations have been duly conducted with the participation of the people concerned. The Government takes into consideration views of the people in pursuing such projects. In accordance with the national legislation, project developers shall conduct EIA and propose environmental and social impact mitigation plan for the Government to consider approval of concessions. In this connection, the Lao Government has tried to ensure quality and responsible investments in the Lao economic development by the private sector through promoting the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by organizing workshops on this subject for government agencies, businesses and other stakeholders.

## **B. Civil and political rights**

### **1. The right to participate in the public affairs**

33. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the right to participate in the public affairs pursuant to Article 25 of the ICCPR, the Lao government has attached importance to the implementation of this fundamental right which is provided in the Constitution and relevant laws. The Constitution of the Lao PDR Article 39 provides for the right to work and employment. The Regulations on Government Officials Administration provide that those who wish to become government officials must be Lao citizens, aged between 18 to 35 years old, have never been convicted of criminal charges, have specific technical skills, certain level of education, and are in good health.

34. The Constitution and the Law on Elections of Members of the National Assembly (NA) provide that all Lao citizens aged 18 years and above without discrimination on gender, ethnicity, belief, social status, origins, employment have the right to vote and those aged 21 and above have the right to run for election to the National Assembly. In the election to the National Assembly 7<sup>th</sup> Legislature in 2011, the voter turnout was over 99%, reflecting the highest level of unity of the people and their trust in the people's democratic regime of the Lao PDR which corresponds to the country's specific conditions, historical backgrounds, level of economic and cultural development, as well as the exercise by the

Lao multi-ethnic people of the right to self-determination and the people's mastery of the nation.

## **2. Right to life, liberty and personal security**

35. The right to life is protected by the Constitution and laws, especially the Penal Law, Law on Criminal Procedures, and other relevant legislations which have provisions to protect liberty, security and democratic rights of the people, the inviolability in terms of their body, honor and houses as well as the prohibition of all forms of arbitrary threats which may cause damages to honor, body, life, dignity and assets of the people. Article 138 of the Law on Criminal Procedure provides that when a person is arrested, if there is sufficient evidence to suggest criminal offense with imprisonment penalty under the law has been committed by this person, the investigation agencies, People's Prosecutor or Court will issue a detention order for 48 hours to collect initial testimonies. According to the law, the suspect must be held separately from the convicts and must be placed in appropriate conditions because they are considered innocent and in cases of light offences the accused has the right to be released on bail. In any case, the accused shall be promptly brought to the court without unreasonable delay.

36. In regard to the UPR recommendations related to death penalty, the Lao PDR is in the process of creating a Penal Code. In this process, the list of offenses subject to death penalty under the current Penal Law will be revised to be in full compliance with Article 6 of the ICCPR. However, the Lao PDR still needs to retain the death penalty as an exceptional measure with the objective of deterring and preventing the most serious criminal offences, while those under the age of 18 and pregnant women are exempt in all circumstances. Although the Criminal Law carries death penalty the Lao PDR has practiced a moratorium on its use for many years. Furthermore, anyone sentenced to death may appeal and request for amnesty or sentence reduction. As a practice, every year the President of the Lao PDR grants amnesties, sentence reductions or pardons to a large number of inmates including Lao citizens and foreigners. From 2010 to 2013 the total number of 2,712 inmates of whom 477 females have been granted presidential amnesties, sentence reductions or pardons.

## **3. Right to freedom from torture**

37. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations concerning detention facilities, the Lao PDR focuses on implementing the relevant provisions of the Constitution and laws in compliance with the international standards. The Constitutional provisions on the prevention of the act of torture are provided for in Article 6 and Article 42. Following the first cycle of the UPR the Lao PDR became a party to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel or Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2012. The Government has adopted affirmative measures in implementing the obligations under this convention. In accordance with the Penal Law Article 27, penalties do not only aim to punish, but also to re-educate punished individuals to bear a pure spirit towards work, to comply correctly and strictly with the laws, to respect the discipline of social life, and to avoid recidivism on the part of the punished offender and other individuals. Punishment does not aim to generate physical suffering or to outrage human dignity. Article 171 of Penal Law also prohibits any person from using violence and torture, or measures or other acts inconsistent with the laws, against suspects or prisoners during the arrest, trial or serving of sentence; the Law on Criminal Procedure, Article 12, paragraph 4 prohibits the acts of forcing, threatening, beating or torturing of the suspects, the accused or the plaintiff during case proceedings. Furthermore, Article 151 of the same law clearly stipulates the roles of the Office of People's Prosecutor to inspect detention facilities/prisons conditions to ensure that no person is being illegally held or imprisoned. In addition, Article 116

prescribes that taking of testimonies must be done without employing lies, force, threat or torture; violators will be charged with criminal offense in accordance with the law.

38. The Lao Government attaches importance to improving the conditions and developing better management of detention facilities to ensure appropriate prison conditions, education, and wellbeing of detainees. Since the year 2008 up to present, the government has allocated a budget of approximately 75 million USD for the development of prison system throughout the country. The Government also has disseminated international principles including various international human rights treaties especially the Convention Against Torture to the authorities of detention centers to create awareness and understanding regarding the Government's humanitarian policies as well as international minimum standards on prison management and treatment of detainees. At the same time, the Lao PDR has cooperated sincerely with the international community, by giving the opportunity to foreign delegations to visit detention facilities in the Vientiane Capital and some provinces.

#### **4. Right to a fair trial**

39. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the justice sector the Lao PDR has put in place a policy governing the judicial sector which is an important component of the development of a Rule of Law state under the Legal Sector Master Plan by 2020 to ensure equality of persons before the law and the court in accessing to justice. The right to a fair trial is ensured in the justice system especially by the Law on Criminal Procedure, Law on Civil Procedure, Law on People's Courts, Law on People's Prosecutor and Law on Lawyers. The Law on People's Court provides for the independence of judges during trial proceedings, the Law on People's Prosecutor defines the roles of people's prosecutors in monitoring the compliance with the law by the investigative and judicial bodies. The Lao PDR endeavors to implement the obligations under international treaties especially Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which comprehensively guarantees the right to a fair trial and the rights of the accused such as the presumption of innocence, the right to legal assistance, freedom from being forced, threatened or tortured into admitting of guilt and other guarantees.

40. The most important development in the administration of justice in the Lao PDR since the first cycle review of the UPR is the adoption of the Law on Lawyers.. Under the law, all defense lawyers should strive to carry out their work effectively and uphold their rights as stipulated by the law in regards to protecting the rights and interests of individuals and legal entities in accordance with the law. Particularly, the law stipulates that defense lawyers have the right to meet with individuals or legal entities who will be their clients following their arrest, detention or imprisonment. In addition, defense lawyers also have the right to examine, copy, or take note of all documents filed in a court case. Thanks to this law, the Lao Bar Association is gradually strengthening. The Bar now has 183 members and its structure comprises administrative, technical, free legal aid, and international cooperation offices. The Bar also has representative offices in many provinces with two free legal aid offices. Over the past years, the LBA has provided legal assistance in more than 1,700 cases with 96 persons receiving free legal aid. Some 3000 individuals and legal entities received legal consultation from the association's lawyers.

41. Justice at the grassroots level is another aspect that the Lao PDR has concentrated on in order to develop case-free villages, improve people's legal awareness and information, improve the village mediation units and promote the role of customary rules and appropriate traditional practices of various ethnic groups in solving minor differences or disputes. The development of grassroots justice is meant to assist the people to access to justice less formally and more conveniently as part of the strengthening efforts of the national justice system in compliance with the Lao PDR's human rights obligations and

commitments. In regard to the UPR recommendation on a definition of discrimination and the criminalization of marital rape, the ongoing revision of the Penal Law which is currently underway takes these aspects into due consideration.

#### **5. Right to freedom of religion or belief**

42. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to religious freedoms, the Lao Government pays attention to implement the relevant provisions of the Constitution, laws and other related legal documents. The Constitution prescribes that the State must respect and protect all legitimate religious activities by religious members and prohibits all acts of religious discrimination and division of the people, and assures the right to freedom to believe or not to believe in religion without discrimination. In order to translate those Constitutional provisions, the Prime Minister issued the Decree on the Management and Protection of Religious Activities in the Lao PDR, which regulates and protects all the religious activities, aiming at ensuring that all the activities are in accordance with the law, as well as assuring the implementation of the right to freedom of religion of the Lao people to believe or not to believe in religion.

43. The Government is currently in the process of amending the Prime Minister's Decree on Management and Protection of Religion in the Lao PDR to ensure its practicality with the current conditions, in line with the international conventions that the Lao PDR is party to, and implement its international obligations, the relevant UPR recommendations, as well as the recommendations from the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief who visited the Lao PDR at the end of the year 2009. In amending the fore-mentioned Decree, the Government has organized a series of consultation meetings with representatives from various religious groups and relevant stakeholders to collect their comments and opinions for the improvement of the Decree.

#### **6. Right to freedom of speech, writing, assembly and association**

44. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the right to freedom of speech, writing, assembly and association, access to information, the Lao Government pays attention to implement the relevant provisions of the Constitution, related laws and other legal instruments in consistence with the obligations and commitments of the Lao PDR under ICCPR, other international and regional human rights instruments. The national legal framework to implement these freedoms includes the Law on Media, Law on Publication, Law on Trade Unions, Decree on Associations, Decree on Foundations, Decree on International Non-Governmental Organizations, among other legislations.

45. Under the law of the Lao PDR, violations of individual freedoms of speech, writing, assembly, association and others are criminal offenses for which violators will be punished according to the Penal Law, Article 102, which states that any person who violates other person's freedom of speech, writing, assembly, meetings shall be subject to imprisonment term between one to three years or reeducation without imprisonment and fines.

46. As a result of the implementation of the Law on Media, at present in the country there are 123 newspapers and magazines circulating which are owned by both state and private sectors, published daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly. There are more than 57 radio stations across the country broadcasting in AM, SW and FM frequencies including the broadcasts of foreign radio channels such as Radio Vietnam International, Radio China International, Radio France International and Radio Australia International. Recently, there has been development of radio websites in ethnic and foreign languages: Lao, Khmu, Hmong, English and French, broadcasting online enabling listeners from across the globe to access via internet. Currently, there is a technical development effort towards the modern digital system. There are 37 television stations across the country, of which 3 channels are state-owned, 3 channels are privately owned and 3 more channels broadcasting foreign

programs; the national television broadcasts are available in three ethnic languages (Lao, Hmong and Khmu) and 2 foreign languages. Apart from Vientiane Capital and major provinces that have the cable system, people across the country may receive the broadcast signals via satellites or they may choose to view and listen via the internet available for both domestic and global users. Furthermore, there is online broadcasting via internet, which enables audiences both outside and inside the country to follow information in the Lao PDR conveniently.

47. The Government has put in place the policy to facilitate and regulate the access to internet. Currently, various telecommunication enterprises are competing to expand their respective communication grids as well as continuously improving and updating their systems and have enabled the people to easily access the internet. In 2014, the Government issued a Decree on Internet in order to manage and facilitate internet use as well as social media. This Decree forms a legal basis in the enjoyment of the right to access to information and expression of opinions in a responsible manner which is in line with the permissible limitations under international law, particularly Article 19 of the ICCPR.

48. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to Civil Society Organizations, the Lao Government has been implementing the relevant provisions of the Constitution, other related legal documents, particularly the Decree on Associations, the Decree on Foundations and the Decree on INGOs. Currently, there are a total of 149 registered non-profit associations, 172 INGOs working in different areas of the national socio-economic development. The Government is now working on amending the Decree on Associations and the Decree on Foundations and formulating the Guidelines on the implementation of the Decree on INGOs, aiming at more effectively administering the activities of these organizations in a more conducive environment.

## **7. The right to lodge complaints, petitions and seek justice**

49. The Constitution, Article 41, stipulates that all Lao citizens have the right to lodge complaints, petitions and seek justice; State agencies, State officials and citizens are bound under the provisions of the Constitution and Laws. The State protects the right to freedoms and the democratic rights of the people. The Constitution of the Lao PDR prohibits all acts of tyranny or authoritarian and threatening acts that are detrimental to the people's dignity, physical wellbeing, lives, conscience and property. All people whose freedoms are violated by the acts of the State as well as third parties can lodge complaints, petitions and seek justice. The procedure on the exercise of the right to complaints and seek justice of the people is detailed in the Law on Complaints 2005, which is currently in the process of amendment. Under this law, state organizations namely the Executive, Judicial and Legislative organs receive proposals, complaints, petitions from the people. The people can also express their opinions through the members of the National Assembly or propose their views directly to the authorities at central and local levels. The Government and Anti-Corruption Authority functions at the central, ministerial and provincial levels to ensure proper behaviors of public servants and also address people's complaints. During each session of the National Assembly a hotline is set up through which the people express their views on the issues deliberated by the National Assembly or just submit their grievances. The National Assembly has a Department dealing with people's complaints while the views of the people as well as their complaints through the hotline are compiled and then notified by the National Assembly to the relevant State agencies for the purpose of duly and effectively addressing them in order to ensure justice to the people.

## **C. Rights of specific groups**

### **1. The rights of women and rights of the children**

50. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to women's and children's rights, the Lao PDR has been pursuing the policies to enhance and promote gender equality, the advancement of women, protect the rights and interests of women and children. The Government attaches great importance to the implementation of MDGs related to women and children, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two optional protocols, the Beijing Platform for Action, among others. The international obligations and commitments related to women and children are implemented through the 7<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, national strategies and programmes, as well as the legal framework, in particular the Law on the Development and Protection of Women, the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Children, and other related laws and legal instruments.

51. The Lao Women's Union is implementing the Women's Development Plan (2011-2015) while the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW) is implementing the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2011-2015). Women cover 54 % in the agriculture production, 41 % in the handicrafts industry, 57% in trade and service sectors. In the education sector, the level of education of women has improved, the number of illiterate women has decreased. The rate of enrolment of female children in kindergartens rose from 10.9% in 2005 to 33.1% in 2013, in primary schools from 81.2% in 2005 to 95.9% in 2013, in secondary schools from 46.2% in 2005 to 61% in 2013. The number of female students in higher education institutions, colleges increased from 16,595 to 44,035 in 2012. Women working in government sector covers 43% of the total number of public servants.

52. At the present, there is an increase in the number of women who play an important role in the national public affairs. In the 7<sup>th</sup> legislature of the National Assembly of the total 132 NA members, 33 are women, covering 25%. The current President of the National Assembly is a woman. Women hold positions of Chair, Vice Chairs of the National Assembly Commissions. In the executive organs, there are 6 female Ministers and equivalents, 20 female Vice Ministers and equivalents, 70 female Director Generals of departments, 3 female Ambassadors, 11 female Mayors and 191 female Village Chiefs.

53. The Lao PDR has made progress in the promotion and protection of the rights and interests of children. This reflects in the adoption and implementation of various strategies and programmes relating to mothers and children. The National Commission for Mothers and Children is currently the National Strategy on Mothers and Children (2011–2015), National Action Plan on Mothers and Children (2011–2015), the National Action Plan on the Protection and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (2014–2020). The adoption and promulgation of the Law on Juvenile Criminal Procedures will further ensure the protection of the rights of children in accordance with the provisions of the CRC.

### **2. Rights of ethnic groups**

54. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to the rights of ethnic groups, the Lao Government has consistently carried out policies that enhance the harmony, solidarity and equality among the ethnic groups by prohibiting all forms of racial or ethnic discrimination. The Constitution of the Lao PDR stipulates that the Lao PDR is a unified country belonging to all multi-ethnic people and is indivisible. Every ethnic group has the right to protect, promote their fine tradition and culture. All acts of religious discrimination, threat to the harmony of the people and all acts of ethnical discrimination are prohibited. State implements all necessary measures to enhance and elevate the socio-economic

conditions of ethnic groups. According to the Penal Law Article 66 and Article 176 division of solidarity among ethnic groups, discrimination, prevention from participation, exclusion or selectivity based on ethnicity are criminal offences.

55. The Government attaches importance to the protection of the fine tradition, culture and livelihoods of every ethnic group. The Lao Government has a policy to promote the dialects of each ethnic group, though every ethnic group needs to learn the official Lao language and alphabets. The Lao Government has adopted special policies to enable ethnic groups living in the remote areas to access to education by building boarding primary and secondary schools.

56. The ethnic groups in the Lao PDR are proportionately represented in the State administration. Of the total 132 NA members in the National Assembly 7<sup>th</sup> legislature 99 members (26 females) are from the Lao-Tai ethno-linguistic group which covers 75%, 21 members (5 females) from the Mon-Khmer ethno-linguistic group which covers 15%, 7 members (2 females) from the Hmong-Iu-Hmien ethno-linguistic group which covers 5.3%, and 5 members (all men) from the Sino-Tibetan ethno-linguistic group which covers 3.8%. Representatives of ethnic groups in the National Assembly hold high ranking positions such as the posts of the President of the National Assembly, members of the NA Standing Committee, President and Vice-President of the NA Commissions. The NA Commission on Ethnic Affairs is responsible to ensure that draft laws and other important issues being considered by the National Assembly always take into account the equality and non-discrimination principles among the multi-ethnic people. In the governmental agencies representatives of ethnic groups also hold high ranking positions such as the posts of Deputy Prime Minister, Minister, Vice Minister or equivalent, Provincial Governors, Deputy Governors, district mayors, deputy mayors. There are many representatives of ethnic groups holding high ranking positions in the National Defense and Public Security forces. In addition, there are many representatives of ethnic groups in the positions of Director General and Deputy Director General, Diplomat, Head of Academic Institutes and hospitals across the country.

57. In regard to the UPR recommendations related to the group of Hmong people who returned from Thailand in 2009 the Lao Government has provided all kinds of necessary assistance to them in Phone Kham Village, Borlikhamxay Province and Pha Lak Village, Vientiane Province. Some of those people returned to their relatives and resettled in their home villages where they used to live. All those Hmong people who returned from Thailand like any other Lao citizens are entitled to travel documents such as passports or border passes which many of them have already received. Over the past years, the Lao Government organized visits by members of the diplomatic community, international organizations and foreign delegations to those villages.

### **3. Rights of persons with disabilities**

58. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to persons with disabilities, the Lao Government pays attention to protect and promote rights of and create conditions for persons with disabilities. The Government has strengthened the National Committee for Disabled People, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister with Minister of Labor and Social Welfare being the Vice Chairperson. The Committee comprises of representatives of all concerned sectors with the Secretariat of the Committee located in the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare. In order to implement the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to which the Lao PDR is a party, the Government has adopted the Decree on People with Disabilities in the Lao PDR in 2014, which is the first legal instrument dealing with the promotion and protection of the rights and interests of this group of people. The Decree aims at creating an enabling environment for them to live a normal life in the society, receive healthcare and rehabilitation, medical

treatment, education and training, permanent jobs, access to information, funding, service centers and join associations for people with disabilities. The Government ensures the elimination of discrimination and other negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. Moreover, associations of people with disabilities have been established to protect the rights and interests of specific categories of people with disabilities as well as to develop their capacities, talents and abilities. At present, there are about 69,161 people registered themselves as people with disabilities. It is estimated that there are about 600,000 people with disabilities throughout the country most of whom are victims of UXOs and other war remnants. In addition, the protection of people with disabilities is included as an integral part in the Labor and Social Welfare Strategic Plan 2010-2020 and periodic Labor and Social Welfares Strategic Plans.

#### **4. Assistance to victims of human trafficking**

59. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations related to anti-human trafficking, the Lao Government has established and improved national mechanisms to tackle the problem of human trafficking, implementing projects and cooperation with foreign counterparts to strengthen the work of the National Steering Committee on Anti Human Trafficking. The Government cooperates with the Government of Thailand in the establishment of Laos-Thailand Joint Taskforce on Anti Human Trafficking. Furthermore, the Center for Counseling and Protection of Women and Children of Lao Women's Union effectively operates to help victims of human trafficking and victims of domestic violence and sexual exploitation. The Lao Government has adopted and implements the National Action Plan on Anti-Human Trafficking, and is currently in a process of drafting a law on anti-human trafficking, which is expected to be completed in 2015.

60. The Lao PDR is a party to regional and international conventions related to anti-human trafficking namely, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its 3 protocols. Furthermore, the Lao PDR has participated in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT Process). Lao PDR has signed MOUs to prevent, combat and assist victims of trafficking with Thailand, Vietnam and China.

61. Law enforcement agencies have contributed in the prosecution of offenders and assisting victims of human trafficking. Between 2008 and 2012, 177 cases were prosecuted. There were 231 offenders prosecuted (145 were female), 422 victims of human trafficking assisted (358 were female), of whom 271 were children below 18 (161 were female). In 2013, there were 56 cases, 77 offenders were prosecuted (51 were female), 171 victims were assisted (87 were female), of whom 65 were children below 18 (59 were female). 1, 419 victims of trafficking were officially repatriated from neighboring countries to the Lao PDR. Of these, 1,350 were female and 1,072 were girls and boys under 18 years old. Between 2006 and 2013, 362 female victims of human trafficking received medical care, rehabilitation, and vocational training in Lao PDR.

62. In order to implement laws and regulations to suppress and prevent human trafficking, the Lao Government has paid attention to organizing trainings for law enforcement agencies throughout the country, especially police officers at the central and local levels in the investigation methods of human trafficking cases. The total number of participants who attended the trainings were 735 persons, of whom 112 were female. Since 2009–2012, 13 trainings on victim's identification were organized for police officers, prosecutors and judges with 445 participants. Moreover, awareness raising campaign on safe labor migration and anti-human trafficking were organized for officials, the general public, students, factory workers and communities. In 2013, there were about 10,000 people who attended the awareness raising activities.

### **III. Constraints and challenges**

63. UXOs remaining from the Indochina war, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, limited human resources, budget constraints constitute obstacles for the full achievement of the MDG targets and the national socio-economic development targets.

64. Poverty is the main cause for many families in rural areas not being able to meet expenses of supporting their children to remain in schools or to attend higher education. The dropout rate of students remains problematic and needs to be further addressed.

65. Dissemination of laws and legal instruments, human rights conventions including the information on the UPR has not been widely covered throughout the country due to state budget constraints, limited national capacity and limited resources provided by the international community. Thus, awareness and understanding of some officials and the general public about laws and regulations as well as the human rights obligations and commitments of the Lao PDR remain limited and are not sufficiently in depth.

66. Professional skills, labour skills and access to funding of people at grassroots level are still limited; low income, labour migration from rural to urban areas remain high; illegal migration of Lao people to work in neighboring countries still persists resulting in their vulnerability to human trafficking, violence and sexual exploitation.

67. Implementation of policies on gender equality and promotion of the advancement of women has not been sufficiently carried out in the society. Many Lao women are still under the influence of their family and traditional stereotype attitudes towards women. This limits their ability to access to justice and receive useful information for their self-development. The number of female government officials in decision-making positions is still not high enough.

68. In the implementation of the UPR recommendations accepted by the Lao PDR, coordination among various ministries and organizations can still be further improved, the monitoring of follow up on recommendations was not systematic, the collection of data and statistics on the implementation faced difficulties. Furthermore, a number of recommendations are too broad and not specific in nature, making it difficult to implement them with concrete results.

### **IV. National priorities, commitments and assistance needs**

#### **A. National priorities**

69. The Lao PDR will attach importance to the implementation of the Master Plan on the Development of Rule of Law in order to improve its legal framework and institutional mechanisms to create favorable conditions for the Lao multi-ethnic people to exercise their human rights under the Constitution and laws in line with the international human rights obligations and commitments of the Lao PDR.

70. The Lao PDR will continue to improve the governance at all levels to be more effective and efficient, to promote people's participation in ensuring that the people in the country fully enjoy their basic human rights.

71. The Lao PDR will materialize the national socio-economic development policies, continue the efforts to generally achieve poverty alleviation in 2015 and graduate the country from the LDC status in 2020.

72. The Lao PDR will continue efforts towards the clearance of UXOs in order to expand the cultivation land for the people, to use local potentials in ensuring food security, nutrition and wellbeing of the people.

73. The Lao PDR will accelerate the implementation of the national strategies on public health and education reforms, continuing to improve public health service and education to the people throughout the country.

74. The Lao PDR will pay attention to the development and protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups in order for them to fully contribute to the national development.

## **B. Commitments**

75. The Lao PDR will consider to accede to human rights conventions, including the ratification of the Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and other conventions such as the International Labour Organizations (ILO) conventions, etc.

76. The Lao PDR will continue to translate the provisions of human rights conventions to which the Lao PDR is party into national policies, laws and regulations, national strategies, programmes and projects in order to bring benefits to the Lao multi-ethnic people.

77. The Lao PDR will continue to disseminate information on the constitutional provisions, laws and human rights conventions to which the Lao PDR is a party as well as recommendations under UPR to government officials, stakeholders and the general public.

78. The Lao PDR will strive to fulfill its reporting obligations under human rights conventions to which the Lao PDR is a party.

79. The Lao PDR will continue to cooperate with the international community within the international, regional and bilateral frameworks in order to promote mutual understanding, exchange lessons and practices in the promotion and protection of human rights.

80. The Lao PDR will consider extending invitation to UN Special Rapporteurs to visit the country in the future as appropriate.

81. As the Lao PDR is running for a seat in the UN Human Rights Council for 2016–2018, therefore, if elected, the Lao PDR will actively contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights all over the world.

## **C. Assistance needs**

82. Due to the current level of its economic development, the Lao PDR is still in need of further cooperation and assistance from the international community to support its efforts towards development, poverty reduction, UXOs clearance and especially the implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016–2020).

83. In order to realise national priorities and commitments in the promotion and protection of human rights, the Lao PDR is still in need of further cooperation and assistance from the international community in respect of capacity development for human rights implementation and reporting, the implementation of UPR recommendations from the second cycle as well as recommendations of Treaty Bodies under the human rights conventions to which the Lao PDR is a party.