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Lao People's Democratic Republic

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I. Process for the preparation of the report

1. The National Report under the 3rd cycle of the Universal Periodic Review has been prepared by the Technical Drafting Committee, composed of members from the line ministries and relevant sectors, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) as the focal points. The information used was based on the coordination with and contribution from the line ministries, relevant sectors and State organizations in accordance with the United Nations Human Rights Council's General Guidelines, relevant resolutions and decision¹ and the subsequent Guidance Note.
2. This National Report is focused on the implementation of the 116 recommendations that the Lao PDR had supported under its 2nd cycle review in 2015, reflecting the importance attached and efforts made by the Lao Government in the promotion and protection of human rights, with a view to assuring the enhancement of the rights of the Lao people in accordance with the Constitution and laws, and in line with the obligations of the Lao PDR under the UN human rights treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party.
3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has presented versions of the draft report for consultations with line ministries and relevant Sectors (4 times), and international organizations, CSOs and INGOs (2 times) before submitting to the government for approval.

II. Process of implementation of the recommendations

4. The Government has seriously taken up the responsibility to implementing the 116 recommendations that the Lao PDR supported. The process began with the translation into Lao language and clustering of all the recommendations, officially published and distributed to various sectors and government agencies, CSOs and INGOs that are operating in the Lao PDR. With the support of the UNDP through the SPLSMP², MoFA has organized numerous consultation sessions with the line ministries and relevant sectors in order to formulate an Action Plan with designated responsible agencies and activities to implement the recommendations, with the majority of them linked to 8th NSEDP³ and the work plans of the respective implementing agencies. The National Committee on Human Rights, through MoFA, had established a Technical Working Group to monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations. The group met periodically to review the status of implementation. The Lao PDR has amended and adopted a number of laws, put in place policies and measures to implement those recommendations.

III. Progress on the promotion and protection of human rights in the Lao PDR

5. Simultaneously, in an effort to realize the national motto which is to build a State that is of the people, by the people and for the people, the promotion and protection of human rights of all the Lao people is an important agenda that the Government attaches its special attention to. The Government continues to build and enhance the enabling conditions and environment for the full enjoyment by the people of their political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights as guaranteed in the Constitution and laws, in line with its international obligations under the human rights treaties to which it is a party. Since 2015, the National Assembly has adopted 42 new laws and amended 31 of existing laws, including the Constitution. The amended Constitution now stipulates that the State acknowledges respects, protects, and guarantees the human rights including fundamental rights of the citizens in accordance to the law.
6. Over the past five years, Lao PDR continues to maintain its political stability and security, along with continuous high rate of economic growth, averaging 6.5% per year, the living conditions of the people had also gradually improved. The Government has adopted the 10 year Strategic Development Plan for 2016-2025, the Vision 2030, and the 8th NSEDP for 2016-2020, with a view to graduating from the LDC⁴ status by 2024, to become

a self-reliant and an upper-middle income country by 2030, on the whole is to constantly enhance and up-lift the living conditions for all the multi-ethnic Lao people.

IV. Implementation of the recommendations

A. Adoption and implementation of the human rights treaties⁵

7. The 8th Legislature of the National Assembly had adopted its Law Making and Amending Plan for 2015-2020 with a total target of 105 laws⁶. These ambitious efforts, in part, stemmed from the political will to integrate the substance and aspirations from the international treaties to which the Lao PDR is party, including human rights treaties. The said new laws include the codification of the first ever Penal Code, Civil Code, Law on State Compensation, Law on Treaties and International Agreements, among others⁷. There are also amendments, for instance, the Law on Election of the National Assembly and the People's Provincial Assembly, and so on⁸. The Lao PDR has streamlined the provisions of the international treaties, which it is party to, including human rights treaties, into its domestic law such as the inclusion of the definition of torture, trafficking in persons, corruption, genocide, terrorism, money-laundering and financing of terrorism, ethnic discrimination, discrimination against women, as well as discrimination against persons with disabilities into its Penal Code and stipulated those acts as criminal offenses.

8. In order to more effectively monitor the Lao PDR's implementation of the human rights treaties, to which it is party, the Lao PDR has revised and amended the Terms of Reference of its existing national human rights mechanisms, such as: the National Steering Committee on Human Rights established 2012⁹, which has been renamed to the National Committee on Human Rights, as well as its mandate and network of focal points across relevant government organizations, offices of prosecutor, legislative organizations and mass organizations has been improved and expanded, with a view to guaranteeing the implementation by those organizations with higher productivity. The National Commission on Advancement of Women and Mothers-Children (NCAWMC)¹⁰, the National Committee for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, and the National Steering Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking¹¹ set up its network at central and local levels. These national committees and commissions have improved their respective mandates and ToRs to be more robust and increased its capabilities on cooperation and coordination with various sectors in society to be more involved in their respective operating processes. The National Assembly has established its Women's Caucus and improved its hotline service (156). The Prime Minister's Office has also opened its own hotline (1516) and installed the people's complaint boxes at various ministries in order for them to be able to directly communicate their comments and questions regarding their collective and personal issues and interests.

9. The Lao PDR continues its awareness raising and capacity building for state officials from central to local levels on the UN core human rights treaties and the additional protocols, including those the Lao PDR has yet to become a party. It shall also continue to proceed with its legislation adjustment efforts i.e. steadily improving its necessary and appropriate internal mechanisms to match the actual conditions and leading to the consideration of ratification of those international human rights instruments at appropriate time.

B. Awareness raising and training on human rights affairs¹²

10. The Lao PDR attaches importance to awareness raising and training on human rights for state officials and the general public in order to create a conscience of respect for the fundamental human rights i.e. legal awareness across society. The Lao PDR also pays attention towards building capacity as well as better understanding for the officials whose responsibilities include coordinating and implementing the promotion and protection of human rights, including law enforcement officers and other authorities from central to local level, members of the National Assembly and People's Provincial Assemblies, academics and students, stakeholders and the general public through various initiatives on regular

basis. Some of those activities include organizing trainings, seminars, and discussions and on occasions thematic experts were invited from abroad to share their lessons and perspective. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also published a compilation of human rights treaties book, as well as a handbook on basic human rights information and distributed them to officials and law enforcement officers, members of the National Assembly, judicial officials, lawyers and law students. The MOJ¹³, together with NCAWMC and MPS¹⁴ have created brochures on protection of the rights and interests of children to distribute free of charge across the society. In order to raise awareness and understanding, and to enhance the respect for human rights, the Lao PDR has celebrated the International Human Rights Day in December of every year, along with guest lectures on human rights organized at various educational institutions. Other relevant international commemorations such as International Women's day, Children's day, Anti-Human Trafficking day and others were also organized for the general public.

C. Human rights cooperation at international, regional and bilateral levels¹⁵

11. In order to implement the UPR 2nd cycle's recommendations, as well as treaty obligations that the Lao PDR is a party to, the Lao PDR has not only focused all its endeavors and capacity on domestic implementation, but has also cooperated with the international community and international organizations, including OHCHR and its regional office. Concurrently, the Lao PDR has received assistance from the UN Country Office in the Lao PDR through the LSMP Project, the bilateral cooperation through CEGGA¹⁶ program which is under the financial support from the EU and Switzerland, as well as the TCP¹⁷ with Australia, and other assistances from UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, and the World Bank. The Lao PDR has a Human Rights Dialogue on a yearly basis with the EU and biennially with Australia, in order to exchange the lessons learned in terms of implementing the promotion and protection of human rights.

12. The Lao PDR has actively cooperated with ASEAN in enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights, including the development of normative frameworks, the policy, plan for implementation of all ASEAN human rights mechanisms. The Lao PDR also took lead in undertaking the ASEAN Thematic Studies on the Right to Peace and the Right to access to tertiary education.

D. Cooperation with treaty bodies and special procedures (recommendations 66, 68 and 69)

13. The Lao PDR continues its cooperation and communication with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council and the treaty bodies to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights. During the 2015-2019 period, the Lao PDR has submitted 4 national reports, namely, on ICCPR¹⁸; CEDAW¹⁹; CRC²⁰; CRPD²¹; in 2018 it has submitted its national report on its implementation of the OP-CRC-AC and OP-CRC-SC to the relevant Committee and is currently awaiting the review process. At the moment, the Lao PDR is mustering its efforts to expedite the completion of its initial report under the ICESCR and its subsequent submission in haste. In 2020, the Lao PDR will begin the drafting process of its 19-21 report under the ICERD along with its initial report under the CAT.

14. The Lao PDR continues to cooperate with the special procedures, as it has invited and received visits by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2017, and the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights in 2019. The Lao PDR will continue to cooperate with the UN Special Procedures including, as appropriate, inviting thematic special rapporteurs which shall be on a case by case basis.

E. Development of rule of law and good governance²²

15. The Lao PDR continues to implement the LSMP²³ 2009-2020. Since 2015 up to present, it has emphasized on improving the Justice Sector, building good governance and public administration, strengthening prevention and anti-corruption.

16. In developing and improving the Justice Sector, the Government focalized its efforts on completing its law making and amendment targets, strengthening the organizations in the Justice Sector, building capacity for the law students and legal professionals, and further promoting the law dissemination campaigns and access to justice. Since 2015, the 8th legislature of the NA²⁴ has adopted 43 new laws and 31 amendments.

17. In order to further strengthen law implementation, the Lao PDR has given importance to dissemination and campaigns on laws, legislations and human rights treaties to which the Lao PDR is party, through many forms including trainings and seminars for State officials from central to local level, law enforcement officers and judicial officials, in order to raise their awareness and capacities specifically on human rights. In addition, the Lao PDR has created a legal database in a form of the “Lao Law Application” for both IOS and Android platforms, allowing the people to access to legal information and encourage their participation in providing their comments to the draft laws. The Lao PDR has frequently disseminated law in some ethnic languages through the national and community radio and television stations.

18. On judicial development, the PSC²⁵ and the OSPP²⁶ have improved their respective organization and subsidiary organs to better match the actual socio-economic conditions. The laws related to the work of the courts and prosecutor’s offices have also been amended, to enhance the capacities of the judges and prosecutors. As a means to further promote and provide better access to justice for the people, the Government has issued the Decree on Legal Aid and Decree on Legal Aid Fund for the disadvantaged people in 2017. At present, there are 15 Legal Aid Offices across the country, out of which 12 are located in the Provincial Justice Departments, 3 in District Justice Offices, which has increased access to justice for the people.

19. On improving good governance and public administration, the Lao PDR has focused its attention to increasing the effectiveness of its governance and public administration through improving the organizational structure of all public administration levels, to become more lean, robust and consistent with the actual conditions, with an aim to carrying out their roles in macro public administration in a more effective and productive manner. At the same time, the Lao PDR has also improved the local authorities and mechanisms as deemed appropriate, to ensure that the local public administration adheres to the “3 Builds Directive”²⁷. Additionally, the management of State employees has been improved²⁸.

20. The Lao PDR also has put in efforts to improve and modernize its public administration through initiating Personnel Information Management Systems (PIMs) as the mainframe accounting for State officials and issuance of ID cards for State officials across the country which is expected to be completed by 2021. In this regard, the Lao PDR also has made progress in managing its citizen affairs, namely the amendment of the Law on Family Registration 2018, conducted studies to establish a modernized e-database for citizen affairs especially for registration and citizen statistics data gathering.

21. On strengthening the work on prevention and anti-corruption, since 2015, the Lao PDR has adopted many legislations, for instance, the Law on State Inspection 2017, Decree on Ethics of State Officials-Employees 2019, among others²⁹. The State Inspection Authority has conducted Assets Declaration of all State officials and employees 2 times in the 2016-2017 period. The Lao PDR continues to implement its Strategic Plan on Anti-Corruption until 2020, Plan of Actions (POA from here onwards) on Prevention and Anti-Corruption 2016-2025 which has been integrated into its 8th NSEDP. Furthermore, anti-corruption inspection has been conducted in a strict and momentous manner, particularly in monitoring and inspecting corrupt behaviors of Government officials, State authorities, business men and entrepreneurs with re-education, disciplinary measures, criminal and compensatory or parity measures based on the severity of offense of each case. In 2018, there were 1,002 persons of suspicious behaviors, out of which 113 persons have been

prosecuted, 55 persons have been found guilty by the courts. These include State officials and businessmen.

F. Political and civil rights

1. Right to freedom of expression and media³⁰

22. The rights to freedom of Lao citizens to speech and writing has been guaranteed in the Constitution Article 44. In this regard, in order to further build upon those substance and aspiration, the Lao PDR has also adopted many relevant laws. The rights to freedom of expression in criticizing persons through the media in a creative manner, legal persons and organizations and the rights to express opinions towards the current affairs, both domestic and international, and the rights and freedom to access information, have all been stipulated in the Law on Media³¹ and other laws³². Any violation of a person's rights and freedom to lawful expression in speech or writing is a criminal offense according to Article 221 of the Penal Code 2017. However, in exercising the rights and freedom of expression must take into account the obligations and accountability to the reputation and dignity of others, national security, social orders, social harmony and other values as provisioned in the ICCPR's Article 19 (3). In line with the said provision, the Lao PDR has stipulated limitations in the Law on Media and the Law on Combating and Preventing Cyber Crime with a view to preventing the media from promoting violence and any advertisement for the purpose of war, distorted information or disinformation, slandering or libels against the reputation and dignity of individuals, legal entities and organizations, prohibition of any advertisement of crime and allurements which lead to ruin, damaging to the national security, peace, social order, the fine culture and traditions of the country. Through the Gap Analysis conducted by an international law expert from the CEGGA program, a report was presented on 27 June 2018³³, it was observed that the domestic laws are in line with the limitations provided for in Article 19 number 3 of the ICCPR, and are not in violation of the basic principles of international human rights law including those relating to freedom of expression and media.

23. The rights to expression of the citizen has been promoted in many forms such as seminars on related themes, expressions through conventional medias (prints, radio and television) as well as online social media with 2.5 million people as registered users of Facebook which has become the main platform of the public, individuals and organizations alike are freely engaged in expressing their opinions that are lawful. In addition, the Lao PDR also promotes Digital Economy, in late 2018 ICT services in urban and rural areas has enabled the people to access and use them conveniently³⁴.

2. Right to association (recommendation number 152, 153 and 154)

24. The Government considers the associations and foundations as well as civil society organizations of both domestic and from abroad as important contributors to the national building and development. The Government has laid out the policy, improved and adopted a number of legislations³⁵ with an aim to better facilitate the approval processes of registration and activities of Lao associations. The MOFA has issued a Guideline in 2018 on detail implementation of Article 55, para 2 of the Decree 238 on granting of approval for associations and foundations to receive funds, properties and experts from overseas. In order to further facilitate the work of the associations, MOHA³⁶ has published a Handbook on operations of associations and various paperwork required for establishing an association or foundation as a reference for the State agencies and the people in general, it has disseminated those said legislations to line ministries and relevant sectors across the country, including any citizen who might be interested in forming an association or foundation, representatives of CSOs who have been officially approved across the country. In an attempt to facilitate the approval of associations in a more timely manner in accordance with the new Decree, the Government assigns line ministries and equivalent organizations to take ownership in considering and approving of associations of any economic, vocational, technical or innovative nature. As for foundations, MOHA, Provincial Governors, City Mayors are the ones who consider and approve in accordance with the working scope of each foundation. The same Decree also provided for the roles

and duties of local authorities as well as the more lucid coordination among central and local authorities. At present, the Lao PDR has approved a total of 163 associations and 25 foundations. The Government has established a mechanism to link between the State agencies and representatives of CSOs and other development partners to exchange the lessons learned from implementing various activities and relevant legislations.

25. The Lao PDR has created a good environment and conditions for the operations of INGOs that are working in the Lao PDR, based on the Prime Minister's Guideline in 2015 to further explain in detail the Decree 013 of 2010 on Management of International Non-Governmental Organizations, with an aim to productively managing the operation of INGOs. These two legislations have been disseminated to the relevant sectors and local authorities, with an aim to promote better understanding and harmonized implementation across the country. In this regard, the Lao PDR has also set up a discussion platform between the Government and NGOs and donors, to meet quarterly and monitor the implementation and discuss on how to best tackle the challenges. At the moment, the Lao PDR has granted Operation Permits to 167 NGOs.

3. Rights to freedom of religion³⁷

26. The Lao PDR respects and protects the rights and freedom of the people to believe or not to believe in religion as enshrined in Article 43, and prohibits all acts of division among religions and people in Article 9 of the Constitution. Decree number 92/PM³⁸ of 2002 has been amended and replaced by Decree number 315/GOV in 2016, based on consultations with relevant sectors, various religious leaders, and other stakeholders. The new Decree consists of many new provisions on principles, regulations and measures concerning the matter, in order to enable monks, priests, preachers, believers and religious organizations to conduct their activities in accordance with the law, regulations, legitimate interpretation and preaching of each religion, with an aim to protecting, maintaining and enhancing the national culture, promoting national harmony among believers while also contributing to the nation's safeguarding and building. MOHA has been conducting a number of dissemination workshops and campaigns and wide consultation with an aim to gathering of comments from religion believers and local authorities, and religious organizations across the country towards the implementation of the said Decree. The largely prevailing views are that this Decree is most suitable for the current state of affairs. At the same time, as the responsibilities of MOHA and LFND³⁹, who have their administrative networks from central to local level, have formed a mechanism for protection and promotion of the rights and freedom to religion across the country.

4. Right to fair trial⁴⁰

27. Article 53 of the Constitution stipulates that "Lao citizens are all equal before the law irrespective of their gender, social status, education, beliefs and ethnic group." In order to ensure that all Lao citizens enjoy the right to fair trial and protection of the right to contest and argue evidence against him and present evidence in his favor, the Lao PDR has rolled out a number of legal instruments⁴¹, all of which provided the basic principles of criminal and civil procedures that guarantee equality of all citizens before the law and courts and guarantee of the following right⁴². Especially criminal proceedings must be conducted in an open manner; the judges must be independent, impartial and adjudicate cases in accordance with the laws. Article 65 of the Criminal Procedure law clearly stipulates on the rights of the accused, for instance the rights to be informed of the charge(s) against him and contest the charge (s), rights to receive explanations of their rights and obligations in case proceedings, rights to provide evidence and testimonials, rights to request to be released on bail, rights to access the investigation order, prosecution order and statement of the Head of the Office of People's Prosecutors, rights to access the case files, rights to be represented by and meet a lawyer or protector, rights to object and request a change of judges, experts or interpreter, rights to make a counterclaim on the acts or orders that are deemed as wrongful made by the Head of the Investigation Organization, investigating officers, the Head of the Office of People's Prosecutors or the officials or staffs, rights to appeal against and request for revocation of the orders made by the Head of the Investigation Organization or the Head of the Office of People's Prosecutors.

28. In order to provide assistance and protection of rights of the accused who may be a disadvantaged citizen, the Government has adopted the Decree on Legal Aid in 2018 and assigned the Ministry of Justice, Provincial Department of Justice, City Authorities, District Justice Offices, LBA's⁴³ Legal Aid offices to be providers of free legal aid. The LBA's Legal Aid Office in Vientiane Capital has been established and provided free legal advice to the public between 2015-2020 in a total of 150 times, with 96 cases, out of which 30 were criminal cases, 41 civil and 25 family cases.

5. Against torture, treatment of inmates and arbitrary arrests⁴⁴

29. Torture and degrading treatment are criminal offenses, according to Article 212 of the Penal Code⁴⁵. Article 87 of the same law also provides any individual who physically assaulted or tortured a sentence-serving prisoner is punishable by 3 months to 3 years imprisonment or correctional measures without imprisonment and fines.

30. Article 257 of Criminal Procedure Law and Article 10 number 7 and Article 54 of the Law on Office of People's Prosecutor 2017 provide that the Offices of People's Prosecutor has the right to inspect the conducts of officers in charge of detention and holding facilities, correctional and detention centers and other judgment enforcement facilities. All those facilities mentioned above must abide by the Orders from the Head of OPP⁴⁶ of their respective jurisdiction in accordance with the law. Article 55 of the latter law further stipulates that all complaints, comments received from detainees must be forwarded to the OPP within 48 hours. In order to ensure the inspection of all holding and detention facilities, the Government has established a coordination and cooperation mechanism among MPS, MOJ and OSPP⁴⁷, designating officials from each organization to be stationed at those facilities, at the moment such a mechanism has been implemented in 2 pilot provinces⁴⁸. Other provinces are expected to follow suit in due time.

31. The Government attaches attention to a policy for humanitarian treatment of prisoners, aimed at improving the living conditions in prisons. As such, the Government has allocated a budget to steadily upgrade and improve the conditions of detention facilities, through infrastructure development of many correction-detention facilities across the country with an aim to reducing the crowdedness of prisoners. A new prison has been constructed at Tarnpiao village, Vientiane Province, not only with a more spacious facility but also one that has its own modern clinic for prisoners. Furthermore, the Government also has other humanitarian treatment for prisoners⁴⁹. On special occasions of the Nation, the Government also grants clemency or pardons such as reduction of sentence or early release⁵⁰. Since 2015-2018 there were a total of 4,864 prisoners who received clemency, out of which 1,001 were female. As for 2019, there are currently 1,842 prisoners under consideration for clemency, out of which 349 prisoners are being considered for release.

32. Arrests and holdings made by officers must be done on the basis of an order from the Chief of the IIO or the OPP or PC⁵¹. Arbitrary holding, arrest or detention is a criminal offence under Article 217 of the Penal Code. The Law on Juvenile Procedure, Article 14 stipulates on prohibition against violating the rights and freedoms of children, prohibits acts of unlawful holding, arrest, detention, property or physical search of the child, offenders shall be prosecuted and subject to criminal liabilities as well as compensatory fines. The Law⁵² also provides that if necessary it is permissible to hold a child in custody for 48 hours if the offense is serious, which carries a maximum sentence of 3 years imprisonment or more, provided that there are strong and sufficient evidence, and the officers must notify the parents on the grounds for holding the child and inform them of their legal rights.

6. Anti-trafficking in persons⁵³

33. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) is defined as a criminal offense in the Lao PDR in accordance with the Law on Anti-TIP 2015 and the Penal Code in 2017, with the same definition of TIP as stipulated the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, all of which the Lao PDR is party. At the moment, the Government is implementing its National Plan on Anti-TIP Phase 2 for 2016-2020, with allocated national budget and assigned the National Steering Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking as the main implementing agency, in

collaboration with relevant government agencies and stakeholders. The Lao PDR has established bilateral cooperative platforms with 4 neighboring countries and multilateral cooperation at sub-regional and regional level, as well as cooperation with international organizations.

34. In order to address the root causes of human trafficking, the Government considers prevention and suppression as the main tasks, expediting the awareness raising campaigns on the danger of human trafficking for all members of society especially women and children and focusing on the people living in border areas and high-risk villages. Up to present, the campaigns have reached 83 target areas, covering 451 villages, amounting to 17,274 people including 8,805 women. Awareness raising campaigns on the danger of human trafficking were conducted through many means and platforms such as: radio and television programs, brochures, dramas, short films, music contest and many other activities. Trainings were organized for the mass media to enhance the effectiveness of advertisements against human trafficking and illegal migration, Annual events were held on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons with participation from government agencies, stakeholders and the general public.

35. In strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officers from central to local level which is the top priority for preventing and combating of human trafficking, the Lao PDR emphasizes on dissemination the relevant treaties along with relevant domestic laws and national POA in efforts to strengthen village authorities and those working in the area of anti-human trafficking at local level, to have a clear and common understanding of this important work. Furthermore, the Government also strongly emphasized training on victim identification, providing of first instance assistance with victim's rights and interests oriented approach, human trafficking specific investigation-interrogation techniques, dissemination on the UN treaty bodies concluding observations concerning human trafficking, ethics of officers concerning human trafficking proceedings, in a total of 13 training session across the country, with 622 participants, including 115 women.

36. The Government attaches a great attention to the protection and assistance of victims as priority by giving prominence on the rights and interests of the victims and provide all necessary assistance to the victims of TIP⁵⁴. The Government has assigned these tasks to the Lao Women's Union (the Counseling and Protection for Women-Children Center) as the main organization. Their works also include providing free physical and psychological rehabilitation, phone counseling and hotline service 1362 that also receives reporting of human trafficking cases. They have also set up Counseling Offices for Women and Children in all 17 provinces and one in the Capital City of Vientiane, as well as 148 districts across the country. In addition, in response to the needs of the victims, the Government has established another temporary Shelter Center for victims of TIP in Louangnamtha Province. Furthermore, the Government has also improved the coordination among state agencies and CSOs in a more harmonious manner in order to provide urgent and timely assistance to the victims.

7. Enforced disappearance

37. The Government has taken all necessary measures through the specifically established Investigation Committee to solve the alleged disappearance case as per the UPR recommendations 121.96, 98, 99 and 100 which were supported by the Lao Government. The Investigation Committee has notified the INTERPOL and ASEANAPOL for assistance and providing of information relevant to the case and stands ready to receive any useful and relevant information from all parties. The search for the truth and bringing perpetrators to face justice according to the law is a responsibility of the Government. At the moment, the said committee continues to conduct their work in investigation, compiling and analyzing of information and evidence, among others. The Head of the Committee also met with members of the Diplomatic Corps and family members of the disappeared person to brief them of the progress of the investigation. The Government, through the Investigation Committee is looking into all aspects that may provide leads to the causes of the disappearance.

G. Protection of specific groups

1. Rights of women and family protection⁵⁵

38. The Government has put in place the policy on gender equality promotion which is another priority. The Constitution Article 37 provides for equality of all Lao citizens of all gender in terms of political, economic, social, cultural and family rights. Anyone who discriminates, divides, obstructs or limits women from participation in political, economic, scientific, cultural, social and family activities is committing a criminal offense under Article 224 of the Penal Code and shall be punished accordingly. Furthermore, the Lao PDR has adopted numerous laws that protect, develop and promote women⁵⁶. In order to further enhance gender equality, the National Assembly in the process of considering adoption the Law on Gender Equality by the end of 2020.

39. In order to further develop and empower women in all aspects, the Government has adopted and implemented a number of plans⁵⁷. The Lao PDR has reported on the implementation of each aspect of work through its 8th-9th National Report under the CEDAW and its Report on implementation of the Beijing Declaration. Through the implementation, it is observed that gender equality in the Lao PDR has been steadily developing and enhancing, which according to the 2018 Global Gender Gap Index the Lao PDR ranks 26th out of 149 countries across the world, in comparison to 2013 GGGI where the Lao PDR ranked 60th, thus reflecting significant progress made.

40. In 2018, the total number of female government officials was 22,530 which accounts for 32.25% of the entire government workforce, comparing to the target of 50% it can be observed to be on track towards achieving by 2020; women in management level positions are provided in detail as follows: 68 women or 7.35% were at minister and equivalent level; 190 women were at vice minister or vice governor and equivalent level which accounted for 12.63%; 798 women were at director general level covering 15.16%; a deputy director level was at 17.54%; in summary the target for at least 30% of management level positions to be occupied by women has been reached at Central level. At district level 2.75% were women and deputy district mayor level reached 14.28%. In the election for the 8th legislature, 41 of the elected members were women, amounting to 27.5% of the total 149 members which falls short of the 30% target, but comparing to the 7th legislature it is a 2.5% increase. There are currently 116 female members of the People's Provincial Assemblies, which is 32% of the total 360 Members, a successful achievement of the 30% target.

41. The Lao PDR is composed of multiple ethnic groups, rich and diverse in traditions, customs and cultures. However, some ethnic groups living in remote areas continue to uphold the odd traditions that may post a risk to women in terms of violence, discrimination and obstacles to their development. On this issue, the Government has employed measures that are inclusive for the ethnic communities to be involved in elimination of those beliefs, the mindset and behaviors that posts risks of violence against women and children are sensitively being addressed through awareness raising on the dangers and ill effects of those old traditions against the wellbeing of women and their development. The campaigns also included dissemination on the National POA on Combating and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2014-2020).

2. Family protection⁵⁸

42. The Lao PDR continues to provide effective protection to families, as a natural and fundamental unit and foundation of society, through the implementation of relevant laws⁵⁹. In addition, the LWU⁶⁰ has issued a Decision on Family Building and Women's 3 Righteous initiative which is related to the 3 Builds initiatives in line with the Decree number 348/GOV on Poverty Graduation and Development Criteria 2016-2025, along with the creation of the Handbook on those said topics. During 2018-2019, the campaign reached 56 districts and 65 villages across the country, covering 12,433 houses and 17,207 households.

43. The prohibition for women aged below 18 years of age from marriage has been stipulated in Article 17 of the Law on Development and Protection of Women.

Furthermore, coercion of children aged under 18 into marriage and marriage with person under the age of 18 are criminal offenses, prescribed in Article 268, Para 3 and Article 269 of the Penal Code. Other than legal measures, the Lao PDR, through the financial support from international organization, has organized campaigns on the ill effect of pre-mature marriage to the youths, including family planning for healthy parents, safe and good lifestyle, with community involvement approach. Another project was initiated on building networks and sharing of life experiences from young mothers, as well as translation, publication and free-distribution of the handbook on inclusive health services, among other activities.

3. The right of the child⁶¹

44. The Lao PDR attaches attention and importance to the protection of the rights and interests of the child i.e. their development through its policy, legal measures and national mechanisms. Other than the Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children adopted in 2006, since 2015, the National Assembly has adopted many laws in relation to the rights of the child⁶². The Lao PDR adopted a number of the National POAs⁶³. At the same time, further attention has been given to implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols that the Lao PDR is party to. In this regard, the MOES⁶⁴ and MOH⁶⁵ have integrated those POAs into their respective work plans.

45. **Children and Health:** access to care and fundamental health services for mothers and children is another important task of the Health Sector. The Government has adopted the National Strategic Plan on Reproductive Health, Services for Mothers and Newborns and Child Healthcare 2016-2025. Furthermore, the Government has adopted the National POA on Mothers and Children 2016-2020 with an aim to reducing under 5 child mortality rate of and malnutrition of children aged below 5 years old. In order to achieve the said POA, the Government has put in place the policy healthcare for mothers and child, with free of charge birth and treatment for children aged below 5 years old, across all healthcare or public health services across the country, and it also has put in place and implemented plans to strengthen capacity of the serving midwives. Through implementing those POAs, many progresses have been made in reducing the rate of stunted children age 5 years and below who weighted below standards to 20.5% which is a success compared to the POA's target of 22%; infant mortality rate was on track and reduced to 41/1000 infants (2017) compared to the POA target of 30/1000 by 2020; under 5 child mortality was at 45/1000 in 2017 comparing to the 5 year POA target at 34/1000 children. In general, there have been good progresses made leading to estimation of all targets being achieved by 2020.

46. **Children and Education:** the Lao PDR continues to improve its legislations and reform education to guarantee of reaching all children across the country and address the issue of children abandoning schools. In terms of legislation, Article 28 of the Law on Education has provided that mandatory education is necessary for Lao citizens to complete; Article 45 of the same law further stipulates that students from families in poverty, disadvantage, of disabilities, of great talent or excellent students especially girls and ethnic students shall receive allowances according to the regulations. The Education Sector has implemented the Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Mothers and Children and integrated it to the 8th 5-year POA on Education and Sports 2016-2020, the 10-year Strategic Plan for Gender inclusive and Mothers-Children 2016-2025.

47. In order to address the issue of children abandoning schools, the Lao PDR has implemented a policy to reduce the child-education costs for parents with allocation subsidies for management costs in schools from kindergarten to upper-secondary schools across the country; provided textbooks for children from kindergarten to lower-secondary schools; subsidies all school costs for lower-secondary school children in 60 schools; scholarships for students from poor families, and the disadvantaged in a total of 1,495 recipients including 807 girls and constructed 75 new high schools. The Government also has adopted special measures such as waiver of school fees, allowances, building dormitories and provided summer schools for failing students; provided supplementary education for target groups aged 6-14 years old who lack opportunities and those living in remote areas or areas without schools in 15 provinces, which accounted for 4,819 students, including 2,131 girls and 2,688 boys. At the same time, the Government allocated 1,2

billion \$ US from the State Budget for the Free-Lunch Program. In addition, the development partners have contributed to the program at kindergartens, pre-primary schools and primary-secondary schools in total of 2,164 locations, with 214,914 children as beneficiaries. the rate of enrollment of children at the age of five has risen above 60%, from 116 districts in 2016 to 126 in 2018; the number of districts with gross rate of new enrolments of 95% or higher has increased from 114 districts in 2017 to 124 in 2018.

48. The Lao PDR continues to make new legislations to protect child labour in line with the ILO Convention to which the Lao PDR is party, especially Convention No. 138 on minimum age for employment and 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour. Additionally, the Lao PDR has a Tri-partite mechanism, issued a Guideline Order on Light Work List, Hazardous Work List to protect the laborers in accordance with the ILO, ensuring their full rights and interests and utilized a labor monitoring mechanism.

49. Article 3 of the Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children clearly stipulates that all children have the fundamental right to birth registration. The Law also provides that the birth certificate should be issued within 5 working days since a request has been filed. In order to ensure a wider coverage of the service, reaching children in remote areas, the Lao PDR has included the awareness raising tasks on the importance of birth registration into its National POA on Mothers and Children 2016-2020 and its projects. Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs has implemented the free of charge mobile birth registration initiative, reaching out to the population in remote areas on important occasions such as the Children's day.

4. Rights of persons with disabilities⁶⁶

50. The Lao PDR attaches importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. The National Assembly has recently upgraded a Government's Decree on Persons with Disabilities to be a law in 2019 to strengthen the protection of their rights and interests, eliminate all forms of discrimination against them, provide conditions for their self-development, self-reliance and able to access social services, enjoyment of political, economic, cultural, social and family rights and equality before the law. Additionally, detailed regulations have been published, such as handbook on basic facilitation for persons with disabilities, handbook for parents and guardians of PWD-children and handbook for village authorities and those working with PWD-children's projects. Awareness raising campaigns on the rights of the PWD were regularly held across the country, with the support from development partners, and reached 2,950 participants and will continue in the future. At present, the Government is considering adopting the national POA specifically for PWDs 2021-2025.

51. In addition, the Government also has other projects, namely, the project for social inclusive and small enterprises for PWDs; study project on better access to socio-economic services for PWD; project on promotion of employment for PWDs phase II; project on improving the livelihood and strengthening PWDs; national project for promotion of PWD's capacity, equality and full participation phase II; project on improving the living conditions and vocational training for persons with mental disabilities; project on promoting social cooperation and income generating activities for PWDs especially women; project for strengthening of the deaf and promotion of sign language; project on transportation for PWDs; and project on power of the PWD's voice. The implementation of those projects have been funded and supported by the Lao government and international development partners.

52. The Government has also enhanced the rights of disadvantaged groups including PWDs into its 8th NSEDP with strategic plan and POAs of relevant sectors, such as Labor and Social Welfare, Education and Sports, Public Health, among others. The same effort shall be preserved for the 9th NSEDP.

5. Racial discrimination⁶⁷

53. The Lao PDR is composed of 50 ethnic groups, living in peace and harmony. All ethnics are equal before the law and have duty to equally contribute to the safeguarding and building of the nation. Article 8 of the Constitution stipulates that the State shall implement

policies for harmony and equality among ethnic groups and prohibits all acts of racial and ethnic discrimination. Article 35 and 37 further emphasized that all Lao citizens, without discrimination based on ethnicity are all equal before the law and have political, economic, social, cultural and family rights on the same footing. The Lao PDR, as stipulated in Article 118 and 227 of the Penal Code, has also criminalized acts of discrimination or promotion of hatred against any ethnic group, acts of division, obstruction, and limitation from participation or double standard practices based on ethnicity. Articles 66 para 3 of the Law on Media stipulates that “no advertising of division, hate speech among ethnic groups and disruption of national harmony is allowed”. Furthermore, the Law on Combating and Preventing Cyber Crimes also prohibits incitement of racial division and discrimination.

54. In order to provide equal access to education, Article 6 of the law on Education provides that “all Lao citizens, regardless of ethnicity and race, have equal rights to access quality education, lifelong learning in accordance with the law and regulations”. The same law also stipulates that families in poverty, disadvantaged groups and ethnic groups shall receive additional support.

55. The Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 2011, the Law on Healthcare 2015 and the Law on Health Insurance 2019 all provide for equal rights of all ethnic groups to access healthcare and treatments.

H. Economic, social and cultural rights

1. Development and poverty reduction⁶⁸

56. The Lao PDR considers poverty reduction as a top priority with an aim to graduating from LDC status by 2024 and achieving the SDGs by 2030. In order to achieve those ambitions, the Government has adopted a number of legislations to facilitate the implementation, for instance, the Law on Resettlement and Occupation 2018; Amended Decree on Criteria for Graduation from Poverty and Development 2017. The Lao PDR has also adopted a Vision 2030 on development steps towards becoming a middle-income nation, based on its socio-economic and intellectual society in a green and sustainable manner. At the moment the Lao PDR has achieved 2 out of 3 criteria for LDC graduation⁶⁹, according to the UNTAD assessment conducted in 2018, the Lao PDR is on track towards LDC graduation by 2024. Lao PDR has also adopted a number of plans for poverty reduction⁷⁰. The NSEDP 2016-2020 also incorporates poverty reduction and SDGs indicators into the said plan. Relevant sectors and local authorities have integrated poverty reduction into their respective annual work plans. The Lao PDR has adopted 3 focal development priorities for 2016-2020 namely: (1) Rural Development and Poverty Elimination; (2) Permanent habitation for the people and (3) building big villages into small towns. There were 485.02 billion Kips of allocated budget for those priorities.

57. The Lao PDR continues to implement its poverty reduction efforts through its Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF) Phase III for 2017-2019 with a total budget of 54 million USD allocated for 1,169 projects in 5 main sectors⁷¹ across 10 provinces, 43 districts, and 263 groups of villages summing to 1,820 villages and covering more than 850,000 of its population. During 2017-2018, the Lao PDR implemented 683 projects in 666 villages, with total budget of 14,73 billion US\$. Out of which, 20,68 billion USD were from Government’s PRF and 1,55 billion USD or 15% were community contributions, which directly benefited more than 580,000 of the Lao people, 50% of which were women. In addition, the PRF was utilized in activities to improve the living conditions and nutrition programs in the amount of 1,22 billion USD in 2 provinces, 7 districts as a pilot for poverty alleviation at family level, before rolling out across the country in the future. Through the implementation up to 2018, poverty has decreased by 62,384 households or 5.13%, number of poverty villages reduced by 1,433 villages or 16.97%, and 23 districts or 15.54%.

2. Rights to education⁷²

58. The Government attaches priority to education in its socio-economic and cultural development, through improving and adopting new legislations⁷³, the Education and Sports Development Plan 2016-2020 and Education Vision 2030. The Government has attempted

to annually allocated 17% of its GDP into the Education Sector as stipulated in the Law on Education, and also increased budgets into construction and renovation of schools annually, across the country. In 2017-2018, across the country, there were 8,604 primary schools with 98.8% enrolment rate and 1,657 secondary schools with 83.1% enrolment rate in the lower-secondary schools and 53.3% in the upper-secondary school.

59. The Government continues to reform its National Education, by providing opportunities for all Lao citizens to have access to all levels of education and prescribed mandatory education up to lower-secondary education level or 9 years free of charge. Since 2012, the Government has issued an Instruction to stop charging school fees up to upper-secondary level of the general education system. At the same time, the Lao PDR has special policy to encourage and promote all ethnic groups and those in poverty and living in remote areas to receive education in line with the Decree 385 on Government Allowances. The Government continues its efforts through the Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL) program in 47 districts across 12 provinces.

60. The MOES proceeds to improve the infrastructure of education in rural and remote areas, and continues to gather funding and support from donors which lead to better reading on the education indicators in those districts, especially the number of districts with higher than 60% enrolment rates of 5 year old children increased from 116 districts in 2016 to 126 in 2018, number of primary schools with net new enrolment rate at 95% or higher increased from 114 districts in 2017 to 124 districts in 2018, provided texts books for all students from kindergarten through to lower-secondary school, provided scholarships to ethnic schools and polytechnics reaching 40% with emphasis on girls from poverty families, provided free-lunch budget for kindergarten through to primary schools for a total of 216 schools and total number of 214,914 student beneficiaries. In 2019 the Government provided an additional 10 billion Kips of funding for school lunch programs.

61. However, Lao PDR still faces many challenges in its efforts to improve pedagogical and learning efficiency, especially insufficient number of teachers. In this regard, the Government has been trying to find ways to address teacher shortage in some rural areas, by promoting local volunteer teachers and reassigning teachers from teacher abundant areas to the in need areas.

3. Rights to healthcare and nutrition⁷⁴

62. The Government continues to attach importance to its policy on looking after the health of the Lao people through adopting a number of laws and legislations⁷⁵. At the same time, it has also adopted various plans, such as the Health Reform Work Plan 2016-2020, National Strategic Plan on Nutrition 2025, and the National POA on Nutrition 2016-2020.

63. The Government emphasizes on developing the infrastructure and expands the public health network in urban and rural. At present, there are 5 government hospitals with total of 1,638 beds and 3 treatment centers with 160 beds at the Central level; across 17 provincial hospitals, there are 1,950 beds capacity which is an increase of 225 beds compared to 2017; at districts level there are 135 hospitals with 1,640 beds, an increase of 20 beds from 2017; and at village level, there are 1,054 health centers, with 3,542 beds, an increase of 34 beds from 2017. There were also 1,050 check-up clinics officially opened by the Ministry of Health. In addition, there is a plan to build 4 new hospitals in 4 provinces, namely Hua Phan, Xieng Khouang, Salavanh and Xayabouri.

64. Lao PDR continues its policy of healthcare and improving the public health with primary concern on prevention of diseases, importance on treatment, implement health insurance schemes, policy on free of charge child-birth and treatment of children under the age of 5 at central hospitals, provincial, district hospitals and health centers. At the same time, it has improved and expanded the Health Fund for people in poverty to cover wide areas across the country, which 2017-2018 reached 94% of the population as compared to 62.6% in 2016. Out of which, 74% was the National Health Insurance Fund.

4. Rights to work and social welfare⁷⁶

65. Article 39 of the Constitution stipulates that: “Lao citizens have the rights to work and employment that does not contradict the law”. Lao PDR attaches importance to

implementing the legislations and policies to promote the labour rights, including nine ILO conventions to which the Lao PDR is party. In order to guarantee effective implementation of those rights in accordance with the actual conditions of each period, the Government continues to adopt new legislations and policies in this area⁷⁷. At present, the Government is implementing many projects to provide trainings and vocational education for the disadvantaged labour groups⁷⁸.

66. Lao PDR has an effort to amend the Law on Labour, in order to comply with international labour standards with the Lao Trade Union as the representative organization in protection of rights and interests of working people.

5. Right to land and migration⁷⁹

67. Land belongs to the entire nation with the Lao multi ethnic people as a whole being its owner, and with the State as their representative in centralized control across the country. The State remains firm on sustainable land use with an aim to reserving 70% of the total land of the country for forest land, 19% agriculture land which is about 2 million Hectares and 11% for construction and other uses. In 2018, the National Assembly has adopted and the Resolution on Land Management Master Plan 2030, and amended the Law on Land in 2019.

68. In order to provide compensation and acquisition of land for those affected, to acknowledge and protect the right to possession of inherited land of the people, the Government has issued a Decree number 84/PM in 2016 on Compensation and Relocation of the People affected by Development Projects. The Law on Land 2019 which is an amendment includes provisions concerning compensation for land rights in various cases including compensation when a law has been violated, reimbursement of the costs from reacquisition of land rights, compensation for damages from activities for the public's interests, compensation from investments activities.

69. In order to reassess the investment projects relating to land rent and concessions of State land, the Government has assigned the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment together with the line ministries, sectors, local authorities to review, take accounts of the land rents and concessions as well as quality review of the investments from 2015 to 2017, which they were able to inspect and register land rents and concessions in a total amount of 1,758 projects or 11,754,417 hectares of land. At the moment, the Government has appointed a Special Inspection Committee to identify projects that are inactive, neglected and ceased operations, the committee has to complete its inspection by September 2019, of 438 projects across the country that have been thus far identified as in breach of contracts or deemed as illegal or in violation of relevant regulations, after which it shall recommend to the Government to terminate projects that are in violation of contracts, legislations and regulations.

6. Cultural rights⁸⁰

70. Culture is fundamental to the national identity, it is source of unity of the nation, and a driving force of social development targets. The Government takes on the responsibility in leading and initiating movements to preserve, expand the cultures that are unique heritage of the nation and ethnic groups, with an aim to harmonizing between economic development and cultural preservation, enhancement and cultural-social development, to uplift wellbeing of the Lao people. The Constitution in Article 8 stipulates that "All ethnic groups have the right to protect, preserve and promote the fine customs and cultures of their own tribes and of the nation", Article 23 provisioned that The State promotes preservation of the national culture which is the representation of the fine traditions of the country and its ethnic people while taking in selected progressive cultures from around the world.

71. Up to present, many of the laws and legislations in cultural affairs have been promulgated⁸¹. At the same time, the Government is also promoting and organizing traditional festivals, rituals that reflect the core values and traditional intellectuals of all ethnics through arts and literature, crafts and textile styles, embroidery, paintings, traditional architecture styles, maintenance and preservation of antiques and historical temples and monuments as national and local heritage sites, promote traditional pottery,

engravings, and accessories, among others. The Government also emphasizes on promoting cultural tourism, as well as natural and historical tourism in various shades and colors in spirits of green tourism, sustainable and integrating to regional and international standards.

72. The Government attaches attention to supporting the Lao people as well as other stake holders across the country to robustly participate in the cultural spheres. The State emphasizes on maintenance and expansion of all undiscovered potentials and innovative forces of the public as a major goal of the cultural affairs, gather forces and resources of all social strata to protect, inherit and enhance the valuable fine traditions in a productive manner. Up to present, there are 3 World Heritage sites in the country, as well as one inscribed Intangible Cultural Heritage (Khaen music of Lao people).

V. Difficulties and challenges

73. Along with all the success in implementing the recommendations from UPR 2nd cycle, the Lao PDR faced a number of challenges as follows:

- The Lao PDR continues to face with the challenge of addressing the lack of experienced and highly capable personnel in implementing human rights, many of the Government officials across sectors lack deeper understanding on human rights which resulted in the implementation of promotion and protection of human rights slow progress in some areas of work;
- Lack of sufficient funding to organize activities according to its work plan is another factor that resulted in slow progress in some areas;
- Awareness and understanding of human rights especially on the international conventions on human rights that the Lao PDR is party among staff and officials in some sectors, from central to local level and private sector are still lacking which is a major obstacle to human rights.
- The socio-economic development implementation of the Lao PDR is considered as still in the LDC status. Started from a very low baseline, it has now made some progress, but still facing challenges in terms of providing some social services in remote areas;
- UXOs continues to be a challenge in providing facilitation to the people's economic development, affecting them directly and indirectly as they are not able to fully enjoy their rights to economic development as well as other socio-economic rights;
- In recent years, Lao PDR has faced severe natural disasters such as prolonged draughts and floods;
- Beliefs, cultural diversity and level of education of the people living in remote areas are still low, which lead to some old and superstitious beliefs and practices that do not match with reality or provide for good living conditions and promotion of women's advancement and gender equality.

VI. National priorities, voluntary pledges and the need for cooperation

A. Priorities

74. Continue to implement and achieve its socio-economic developments based on the priorities prescribed in the 8th NSEDP and the POA on poverty elimination of each period in order to graduate from LDC status and provide an enabling environment for the people to have better livelihoods and fully enjoy their fundamental human rights.

75. Continue to muster all strengths into its Rule of Law development through implementing its Legal Sector Master Plan especially on developing and improving legislations, organizational structures, to create enabling conditions for the Lao people to

fully enjoy their basic human rights under the Constitution and law and in line with the international human rights obligations and commitments of the Lao PDR.

76. Raise more awareness and understanding of the Constitution, laws and human rights treaties that the Lao PDR is party, recommendations under the UPR 3rd cycle, treaty bodies' concluding observations and appropriate recommendations of the special procedures, to all Government officials and staffs in various sectors, stakeholders and the general public with a view to instilling respect for human rights, responsible and just conducts in their line of work as a matter of priority of the human rights promotion and protection efforts.

77. Continue to pay attention to promotion and protection of human rights of those in disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as women, children and PWDs.

B. Voluntary pledges

78. The Lao PDR will continue to further improve and develop its laws and legislations to guarantee the rights of the people under the Constitution and laws in line with its human rights treaty obligations that Lao PDR is party and bring about maximum benefits for all Lao people.

79. Lao PDR will continue to cooperate with the international community through UN human rights mechanisms including those under the HRC and treaty bodies, as well as the ASEAN human rights frameworks in order to further contribute in promotion and protection of human rights i.e. provide better understanding on the realities of human rights implementation in the country. In addition, the Lao PDR will continue to promote bilateral human rights cooperation to exchange on lessons learned, good practices in terms of promoting and protecting human rights and *support of one another* in human rights affairs.

80. Lao PDR will continue to attach importance on its obligations under human rights treaties that it is party, including expediting its delayed treaty reporting obligations.

81. Lao PDR shall continue to cooperate and receive assistance from development partners i.e. the international community, to increase its efforts in socio-economic development, poverty elimination, implementation of the NSEDP, SDGs and UXO removal to provide the people with facilitating conditions and steadily enhance their living conditions and fully enjoy their fundamental human rights.

82. Lao PDR shall continue to strengthen its dissemination of information, Constitution, law and human rights conventions that it is party to, recommendations under the UPR 3rd cycle to all Government officials and staff in various sectors to enable them to have better understanding and respect for human rights which they can utilize in performing their respective functions with a sensitivity and responsibility and to promote effective and productive law enforcement in fairness and sacredness.

83. In order to enhance the priorities and implement the voluntary pledges in promotion and protection of human rights, Lao PDR wishes to continue to receive further assistance and cooperation from the international community supplementing the Government's efforts in order to increase the effectiveness and productivity of implementing those tasks and pledges, including UPR.

Notes

¹ A/HRC/RES/16/21, and A/HRC/RES/17/119.

² Support Project to the Legal Sector Master Plan.

³ The 8th five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

⁴ Least Developed Country.

⁵ (Recommendations number 4, 2, 3, 20, 21, 27, 36, 38, 39, 40, 43 and 65).

⁶ Out of which 50 would be new laws and 55 amendments to the existing laws.

⁷ The Law on Land Allocation, Law on Persons with Disabilities, Law on Gender Equality, Law on Environmental Impact Assessment, Law on Social Security Fund, Law on Preventive Vaccination, and many others.

- ⁸ Law on Petition, Law on Family Registration, Law on People’s Court, Law on Civil Procedure, Law People’s Prosecutor, Law on Criminal Procedure, Law on Juvenile Procedure, Law on Land, Law on Women’s Advancement and Protection, Law on Social Security, Law on Public Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Law on Mass Media, Law on Education, among others.
- ⁹ Which was established in 2012 with its mandate includes leading and coordinating the implementation of the obligations under the ICCPR, ICESCR, ICERD, CAT and the UPR.
- ¹⁰ Which has a mandate to promote and protect the rights and interests of women and children and is responsible for the implementation of the CEDAW, CRC, OPAC and OPSC.
- ¹¹ Which has a secretariat located at the Department of Combatting and Preventing Human Trafficking of the Ministry of Public Security.
- ¹² Recommendations 46 and 6.
- ¹³ Ministry of Justice.
- ¹⁴ Ministry of Public Security.
- ¹⁵ Recommendations 42, 48, 64, 77 and 78.
- ¹⁶ The Programme to promote “Citizen Engagement for Good Governance, Accountability and the Rule of Law” (CEGGA).
- ¹⁷ The Technical Cooperation Program between Lao PDR and Australia.
- ¹⁸ On March 2017, Lao PDR has submitted its initial report under the ICCPR Undergone the review process in July 2018.
- ¹⁹ In June 2017, Lao PDR has submitted its 8-9 report under CEDAW and subsequently reviewed in November 2018.
- ²⁰ In January 2016, Lao PDR has submitted the 3-6 report under CRC and completed the review in September 2018.
- ²¹ January 2016 Lao PDR has submitted the 3-6 report under CRC and completed the review in September 2018.
- ²² Recommendations 113, 124, 125, and 126.
- ²³ Legal Sector Master Plan for Rule of Law.
- ²⁴ National Assembly.
- ²⁵ The People’s Supreme Court.
- ²⁶ The Office of Supreme People’s Prosecutor.
- ²⁷ Building development units, building comprehensively strong district units, and building strategic provincial units.
- ²⁸ With the adoption of the Law on State officials-employees in 2015, Decree on Management Positions of State Officials-Employees, Decree on Capacity Building of State Officials-Employees and Decree on Ethics of State Officials-Employees, and along with a number of Guidelines.
- ²⁹ Including but not limit to: Decree on Monitoring and Evaluation of State Investment Projects 2015, Decree on Savings and Anti-Extravagant 2015, Ministry of Finance’s Decision on Prohibitions and Disciplines of State Officials-Employees 2017, and others.
- ³⁰ Recommendations 136, 139, 142, 144 and 145.
- ³¹ Articles 10, 11 and 12 of the Law on Media 2016.
- ³² The rights and freedom of expression has also been provisioned in the Law on Combating and Preventing Cyber Crimes 2015, the Law on Information and Communications Technology 2016, the Law on Protection of Electronic Information 2017, the Law on Internet of Things 2018.
- ³³ With participants from line ministries and relevant sectors in a total of 80 participants.
- ³⁴ Mobile phone internet coverage (3G, 4G) has reached 95% of the country, amounting to 81% of the total number of villages across the country.
- ³⁵ For instance the Decree on Foundations 2011, the Decree on Associations number 238/GOV, 2017 which replaces its previous edition of 2009.
- ³⁶ The Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ³⁷ Recommendations 130,131, 133, 134 and 138.
- ³⁸ Decree on Management and Protection of Religious Activities in the Lao PDR number 92/PM of 2002.
- ³⁹ The Lao Front for National Development.
- ⁴⁰ Recommendation 127.
- ⁴¹ For instance: Law on the People’s Court Article 8, Law on Civil Procedure Article 8 and Law on Criminal Procedure Article 10.
- ⁴² The right to self-representation, lawyer or other protectors, right to contest and argue and present evidence, the right not to be coerced, threatened, assaulted or torture during the investigation and during the case proceeding in the court, right to be assumed innocent until proven guilty by the court, right to use own language or other languages through interpretation during case proceedings, right to a court hearing.
- ⁴³ The Lao Bar Association.

- 44 Recommendations 103, 104, 106, 107 and 108.
- 45 “Any individual who intentionally, regardless of his/her official duties, causes physical harm or severe injuries or psychological damages to others to obtain or for a third party to obtain information or confession to offenses by the victim or a third party or due to suspicion against the victim or a third party of a wrong doing or use of threat or coercion to the victim or a third party, shall be punishable with 5 to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of 5 to 10 million kips.”
- 46 The Office of People’s Prosecutor.
- 47 The Office of Supreme People’s Prosecutor.
- 48 Louangnamtha Province and Savannakhet Province.
- 49 Such as providing adequate clothing, food, sports, arts, vocational training such as furniture carpentry, textile, sculpting, farming, salon and electrician skills.
- 50 In accordance with the Presidential Ordinance number 001/POL.
- 51 The Investigation-Interrogation Organization or the Office of People’s Prosecutor or People’s Court.
- 52 The Law on Protection of Children’s Rights and Interests, Article 62.
- 53 Recommendations 112, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122 and 123.
- 54 For instance, temporary shelters, legal aid, medical aid, education and vocational training, economic support and facilitate their return to family and society.
- 55 Recommendations 45, 57, 61, 62, 79, 80, 81 and 82.
- 56 Such as :the Law on Combatting and Prevention of Violence against Women and Children, Law on Development and Protection of Women, Law on Women’s Union, Law on Protection of Rights and Interest of Children, and the Law on Family, among others.
- 57 The Vision for Women’s Development 2030, the Strategy on Women’s Development 2025 and the 5 year Women’s Development Plan (2016-2020), The National POA for implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the CEDAW-POA, the National POA on Combating and Elimination of All forms of Violence against Women and Children (2014-2020), 8th NSEDP in connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Among others, the Lao PDR adopted 5 Priority areas namely: promote women’s participation in political sphere and in public and private organizations and implement the said laws on women’s development; strengthening women entrepreneurs and those working in the business sector; promote women’s access to health services, including sexual health and reproductive health; ensuring the quality of education, training and lifelong learning for women and girls; and improve the situation of housewives without income.
- 58 Recommendations 110, 128 and 145.
- 59 The Law on Family, Law on Family Registration 2018, Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children, Law on Development and Protection of Women, Law on Preventing and Combating of Violence against Women 2014.
- 60 The Lao Women’s Union.
- 61 Recommendations 11, 176, 193, 194 and 195.
- 62 For instance, the Law on Combating Violence against Women and Children, the Law on Education and the Law on State Budget which include allocation of budget for the promotion and protection of the right of the child.
- 63 The National POA on Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children, National POA on Mothers and Children 2016-2020, National POA on Elimination of Child Labor 2014-2020 and the 3rd 5 year POA on Gender Equality 2016-2020.
- 64 Ministry of Education and Sports.
- 65 Ministry of Health.
- 66 Recommendation 189 and 190.
- 67 Recommendations 83 and 84.
- 68 Recommendations 50, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169 and 186.
- 69 Namely: the Gross National Income per capita (GNI), Human Assets Index (HAI). As for the remaining criteria i.e. the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI).
- 70 The 5 year Rural Development and Poverty Elimination plan 2015-2020, and Strategic plan for Rural Development and Poverty Elimination 2016-2025 and 2030, Green Development strategy until 2030.
- 71 Education, Public Health, Clean Water and Hygiene, Public Works and Transportation, Agriculture and Forestry, and Energy and Mining.
- 72 Recommendations 177-185.
- 73 The Law on Education 2015, Decree on Higher Education 2015, and Decree on Education for Monks 2017.
- 74 Recommendations 41, 44, 49, 160, 173, 174 and 175.
- 75 The Law on Health Insurance 2019, Law on Prevention and Communicable Disease Control 2018, Law on Health Treatment 2015, Law on Control of Alcoholic Drinks 2015, Law on Vaccination 2018, Decision on Implementation of the Law on Tobacco Control 2015, Decree on Fines and other Measures for Violations of Law and Regulations on Tobacco Control 2019.

- ⁷⁶ Recommendations 47, 158 and 159.
- ⁷⁷ Including the Strategic Plan on Labour Development and Social Welfare 2011-2020; Decree on Minimum Salary in Private, Production and Services Sectors; Minister's Decision on Organization and Functions of the Labour Inspectors; Decree on Social Protection; Government's Notice on raising the minimum salary rate from 900,000 Kips to 1,100,000 Kips; implementing the priorities on labour rights according to the 8th NSEDP 2016-2020.
- ⁷⁸ Such as: the project for labour skills development according to the market's needs 2016-2020; project on promoting employment for PWDs phase II (2016-2018).
- ⁷⁹ Recommendations 170-172 and 196.
- ⁸⁰ Recommendations 187 and 188.
- ⁸¹ The Law on National Heritage, Law on Arts and Crafts, Decree on Ethnic Affairs which are all parts of the Government's policy to appeal to the entire society to join in the movement of preserving the valuable cultural heritage in a productive and comprehensive manner.
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