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The Lao People's Democratic Republic^{*,}**

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1. Information and statistics about the Lao People's Democratic Republic

A. Country profile, population, economy and society

Country and population

1. The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is situated in Southeast Asia, with an area of 236,800 km². It shares borders with the People's Republic of China in the North, the Kingdom of Cambodia in the South, the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in the East, the Kingdom of Thailand in the West and the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in the north-west.

2. The population of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has increased by 55.6 per cent in 20 years from 3.6 million in 1985 to 4.6 million in 1995 and to 5.62 million in 2005, of whom 2.82 million are female and 2.08 million are male. Since the 1995 Census, the population has increased by 1 million or 2.1 per cent per annum. The population density is 25 persons per km² with the most densely populated areas being the plains along the Mekong river and its tributaries. In general, the structure of the Lao population is young with about 50 per cent of the population under twenty. However, the percentage of people under 15 has decreased from 44 per cent in 1995 to 39 per cent (in 2005) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Natural population increase 1995–2005

Census year	Census population	Intercensal increase		Estimated number of births, deaths and natural increase during intercensal period			Estimated net migration '000	Natural annual growth rate, %
		Absolute number '000	Annual growth rate, %	Births '000	Deaths '000	Natural increase '000		
1985	3 584 000							
1995	4 575 000	991	2.5					
2005	5 622 000	1 047	2.1	1 775	590	1 185	-138	2.5

Source: Census 2005.

3. Laos is an ancient nation in the region and the world. The Lao people have lived and gone through stages of existence, evolution and development on this beloved land for long time. In the middle of the 14th century, King Fa Ngum united Lao townships and founded the Lane Xang kingdom, which in the subsequent times was built into a prosperous nation though the country was invaded by foreign aggressors at different times in history. Laos was a vassal territory and colony of foreign powers for almost a century and a half. In the 20th century, particularly after World War II, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party led the multi-ethnic Lao people in a heroic revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the country.

4. On 2nd December 1975 after a long struggle full of hardships and sacrifices, the Lao people won victory and gained national independence. In establishing the Lao People's Democratic Republic based on the right to self-determination, the Lao people have become the masters of their country, which is an independent, sovereign State, and a fully-fledged member of the international community.

5. The administrative system of the Lao People's Democratic Republic consists of 16 provinces and Vientiane Capital City. The Capital City and each province are divided into districts. There are 143 districts in the country. Each district is divided into villages. In the country the total number of villages is 8,955 at the present time. The national administration has four levels: the State, province/Capital City, district and village. At the State level, the president and prime minister are the head of State and the head of government respectively. Provinces are governed by provincial governors, while Vientiane Capital City is governed by a mayor. Districts are governed by district chiefs and villages are administered by village heads. Provincial governors are nominated by the president, districts chiefs are nominated by the prime minister upon the recommendation of the respective provincial governor whereas village heads are directly elected by villagers. Vientiane Capital City, provinces and districts have vertical and horizontal administrative structures comprising departments and offices. Provincial and district vertical departments and offices are technically under the respective central ministry and agency while they are administratively under the provincial governors and district chiefs respectively.

6. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is one of the most diverse multi-ethnic countries in the world. The country's population comprises 49 ethnic groups, which constitute four larger ethno-linguistic groups: Lao-Tai (66.7 per cent); Mon-Khmer (20.6 per cent); Hmong-Iu Mien (8.4 per cent); Chino-Tibetan (3.3 per cent) and others (1 per cent). Since ancient times, ethnic groups in Laos have lived on this land in harmony with love, care and solidarity towards one another without discrimination based on any grounds including ethnicity. Different ethnic groups are found in all parts of the country from the North to the South, from the East to the West. Of the 49 ethnic groups, no ethnic group lives in a large area alone and separately from other ethnic groups.

7. Of the total population, there are also a small number of expatriates (see Table 2).

Table 2

Population, distribution by sex and citizenship

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Population figures</i>			
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Per cent</i>
Laotian	2 811 990	2 789 621	5 601 611	99.6
Cambodian	471	508	979	0.0
Chinese	780	1 045	1 825	0.0
Myanmar	73	81	154	0.0
Thai	372	614	986	0.0
Vietnamese	4 473	4 322	8 795	0.2
Other Asian citizens	50	77	127	0.0
European	78	113	191	0.0
African	9	10	19	0.0
American	175	226	401	0.0
Australian	8	8	16	0.0
Other citizens	42	42	84	0.0
Not stated	2 910	3 884	6 794	0.1
Total	2 821 431	2 800 551	5 621 982	100

Source: Census 2005.

8. The majority of the Lao population (67 per cent) are Buddhist. There are some 4 million Buddhism followers with 4,937 Theravada Buddhism temples and 8 Mahayana Buddhism temples nationwide. 1.5 per cent of the population are Christian with 552 churches in the country. Less than 1 per cent of the population are Muslim and Bahia. There are 2 mosques and 5 Dharma sabha clubs (Houses of Worship) in the country. Approximately 30.9 per cent of the population are animist.

9. In 2005, the percentage of the population below 15 was 39 per cent, while 57 per cent of the population were of working age (15–64 years). It is expected that in 2015 these figures will change to 33 per cent and 63 per cent respectively. Comparing the population aged 0–14 and those above 65 to the population aged 15–64 a growing percentage of working population relative to dependents can be observed. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is now already in the midst of a first demographic dividend period which is estimated to last for about 30 more years until the ageing of the population starts (see Table 3).

Table 3
Population by age and sex in 1995 and 2005

Age group	1995 Census			2005 Census		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
0–14	43	45	44	39	40	39
15–64	53	51	53	57	56	57
65+	4	4	4	4	4	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Census 2005.

10. Life expectancy has increased from 50 to 59 years for males and 52 to 63 years for females between 1995 and 2005. During the same period the total fertility rate has fallen from 5.6 to 4.6 per woman of the reproductive age. The fertility rate of women living in rural areas is as high as 5.4 per cent compared with only 2.8 per cent for women living in urban areas.

11. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic the average household comprises of 8–10 persons due to the fact that Lao people live in extended family groups rather than in nuclear units. Most of the population live in rural areas. However, the percentage of the urban population is increasing. The population is increasing not only in Vientiane Capital City but also in mid-sized cities. At the same time, continued economic growth makes the Lao PDR increasingly attractive to internal migration.

Economy

12. The economy of the Lao People's Democratic Republic is small, underdeveloped and based on agriculture, with a predominance of subsistence and half-subsistence forms of production. Despite the ongoing change in the structure of the national economy, agriculture is still the main component of the Lao economy. In the fiscal year 2005–2006, the share of agricultural production was 45.4%, industry was 28.2 per cent and service sector was 26.4 per cent (2005).

13. The country is listed as one of the least developed countries (LDC) in the world with US\$ 810 in 2008, US\$ 580 in 2007 and US\$ 491 in 2005. Seventy-one (71) per cent of the population live on an income of less than US\$ 2 per day, and 23 per cent live on an income of less than US\$ 1 per day (World Bank, 2005). According to the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report in 2005, the Lao People's Democratic Republic ranked 133rd of 177 countries in terms of economic development.

14. In order to develop the economy the Lao Government has set a socio-economic development vision for 2001–2010, aiming at moving the country from its LDC status by 2020. This development vision was realized through the adoption and implementation of the 6th five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) 2006–2010, which focused on poverty reduction, rural development and economic growth. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)-based 7th five-year National Socio Economic Development Plan (2011–2015) has been drafted and will be adopted by the 7th Legislature of the National Assembly in 2011.

15. In pursuance of economic development in recent years the Lao People's Democratic Republic has concentrated all efforts to overcome various difficulties faced by the country such as the world economic and financial crisis and the lack of financial resources.

16. Thanks to these efforts and the proper policies of the Government, the national economy has enjoyed a steady growth. Despite the impact of the world economic and financial crisis, the GDP has continuously increased, notably by 6.5 per cent in 2006–2007, 7.5 per cent in 2005–2006, 7.9 per cent in 2007–2008 and 7.7 per cent in 2008–2009. Overall, the major source of growth remains the industrial sector (including mining, construction and processing), which has grown by 12.5 per cent. Service has increased by 7.7 per cent and agriculture (including food production, other crops, forestry and fisheries) has grown by 3.1 per cent. Further measures are being undertaken to improve the business climate and boost investment in the Lao economy. According to the economic projection issued by the World Bank, the Lao economy will continue to see robust growth despite the slow global recovery from the economic recession.

17. In general, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is on the right track to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and to realize the development vision by 2020. The implementation of MDG1 (poverty reduction) by the Lao People's Democratic Republic has seen satisfactory progress. The proportion of people living below the national poverty line has decreased over the years from 46 per cent in 1999, to 39 per cent in 1997 and to 33 in 2002 respectively. It stood at 28.7 per cent in 2005 and 26.9 per cent in 2008 (see Tables 4 and 5).

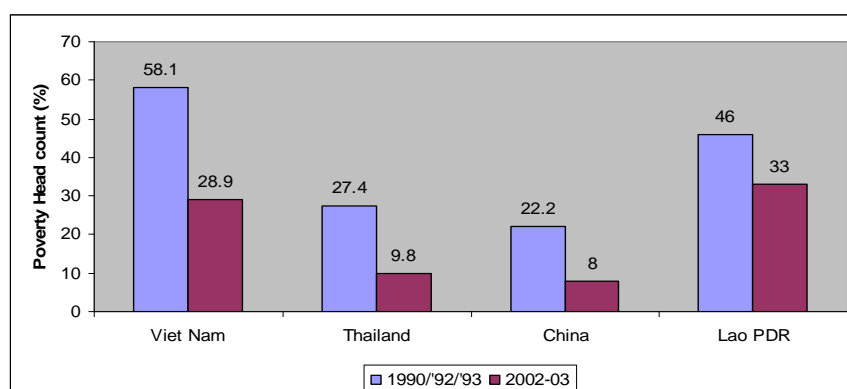
Table 4

The proportion of people whose income is less than US\$ 1 a day

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2010</i>
Proportion of people living below the national poverty line	46	39	33	28.7	26.9	24.25
Poverty gap ratio (incidence depth of poverty)	11	10	8	n/a	n/a	n/a
Share of poorest quintile in national consumption	9	8	8	n/a	n/a	n/a

Sources: LECS1, LECS2, LECS3 and the National Steering Committee on Rural Development and Poverty Reduction.

Table 5
Poverty reduction in Lao People's Democratic Republic and other countries of the region

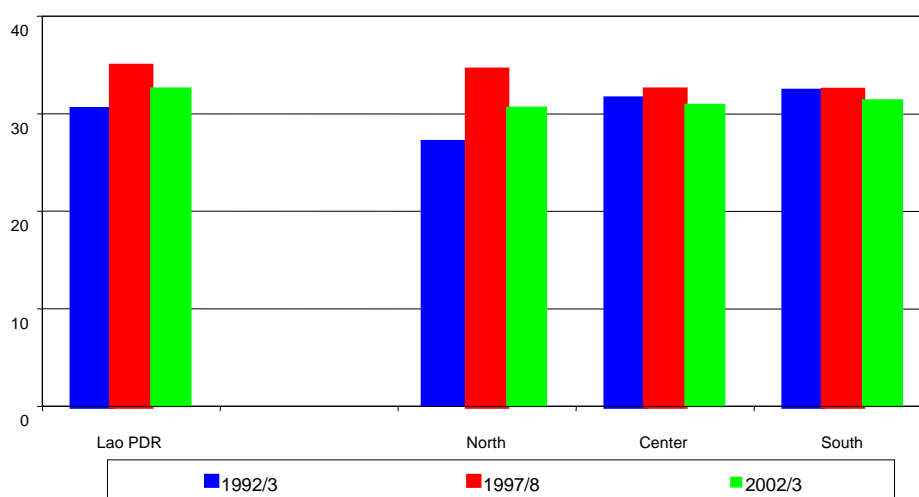


Source: World Bank (2006).

18. Food poverty decreased faster than the overall poverty during the period 1992–2003 with the average months without enough rice in villages decreasing over the same period. Nevertheless, malnutrition is still of high concern in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is estimated that despite the efforts to address this problem, 37 per cent of children under 5 are underweight. Extreme malnutrition is currently a big problem, impacting on 40 per cent of children under 5. In terms of quantity, many households still do not have enough food to meet their energy needs (2,100 calories per capita per day). In terms of quality, diets are highly staple-focused, resulting in an imbalanced nutrient intake.

19. The economic development levels in different regions and localities are not the same and disparities exist among the regions and localities. The Gini coefficient has risen by 3.8 per cent. While there is a nationwide reduction in poverty, the northern region still lags behind other regions (see Table 6).

Table 6
Gini index by region



Source: MDG Report 2008.

20. The structure of the economy has been changing in recent years. The share of agricultural production which used to cover the most part of GDP has decreased from 51.9 per cent in 2000 to 45.5 per cent in 2005. The industrial share increased from 22.4 per cent to 28.2 per cent and the service output share increased from 25.7 per cent to 26.4 per cent in the same period. As a result, the structure of the workforce has also been changing along with the progress in the economic structure. The level of manpower working in the agricultural-forestry sector decreased slightly from 78.6 per cent in 2000 to 76.6 per cent in 2005, while in construction the figure increased from 6.9 per cent in 2000 to 7.7 per cent in 2005, and in the service sector from 14.5 per cent to 15.6 per cent.

21. Enhanced national security and development in the Lao People's Democratic Republic has yielded significant dividends over the past three decades. This has secured peace and stability for the country. Socio-economic development has recorded continual progress reflected in the gradual growth of the national economy, the proper management of finances, the stabilized national currency the Kip, the decline in poverty and progressive path towards achieving the MDGs.

Cultural and social fields

Education

22. Education is a top priority in the policies of the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Translating this priority into practice is among the endeavours of the Government, making education crucial to the development of all other sectors. The Constitution and Law on Education provide that education is both a right and a duty of an individual and the community collectively.

23. The Law on Education provides for compulsory primary education. Education has the aim of making every Lao a good citizen full of morals, knowledge and capabilities. The State and society attend to developing a high quality national education system, to create opportunities and conditions for all people to access to education in the country, especially those living in the remote and rural areas, ethnic groups, women, children and disadvantaged persons. The State promotes and encourages the private sectors to invest in national education, and allows private schools to operate in conformity with the standards set by the State in curriculum development. The State in cooperation with the people themselves builds schools in order to comprehensively systematize the national education to reach the areas inhabited by ethnic groups. Also, the donor community and friendly countries have provided invaluable assistance for the education development of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, especially in building primary schools for children in many parts of the country.

24. Education development is part and parcel of the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES) and is aimed at improving access to education, reducing women's illiteracy, especially ethnic women's, through allocating budget to increase public expenditure on education (see Table 7). The Government is in the process of implementing the Education Strategy by 2020 and Education for All Programmes. The national education system includes formal and non-formal education. The formal education system consists of five levels: pre-school education, primary education, secondary education, vocational education and higher (tertiary) education.

Table 7
Trend in public expenditure on education

	1990/91	1994/95	1999/2000	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Education budget as % of GDP	1.9	3.6	1.4	2.3	3.2	3.2
Expenditure on education as % of total public expenditure	7.2	13.9	7.2	11.0	14.0	15.0

Source: National MDG Report 2008.

25. In general, education has been developing positively in both quality and quantity. Today, primary schools have been built and repaired in the remote areas and 94 per cent of all villages throughout the country. The net enrolment rate is 91.6 per cent in primary schools, 62.7 per cent in lower secondary schools and 36.8 per cent in upper secondary schools. The rate of enrolment of children aged 6 is 86 per cent. The present literacy rate of people aged above 15 is 77.09 per cent. This is higher than in 2005, when it stood at 73 per cent. At the present time, there are 1,123 nurseries and kindergartens, 8,871 primary schools, 1,125 secondary schools (722 lower secondary schools, 35 upper secondary schools and 368 complete secondary schools), 39 vocational schools, 152 higher education schools and colleges. The latter are both State- and private sector-run.

Health

26. The Government has initiated a Strategic Plan in the Public Health Sector for the period 2000–2020 as part of the NGPES. This specific strategy (vision) sets the overall objectives and programmes to meet the needs in healthcare for the multi-ethnic people of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The overall objectives of the public health sector are the following:

- Universal, just and equal healthcare all over the country irrespective of gender, age, social status, customs, religion, ethnicity and residence
- Basic healthcare must meet the needs and expectations of the people
- Improve the health situation of the people, in particular the poor

27. In the NGPES, the Government set priorities and strategies to eliminate poverty through improving healthcare focusing on the country's 47 poorest districts. These priorities and strategies are as follows:

- Increase access to healthcare service
- Increase the use of clean water and toilets
- Decrease child mortality rate
- Promote the production and use of traditional medicines
- Achieve 100 % basic healthcare service in 72 poor districts by 2010

28. The Government set 12 strategic programmes to reduce poverty in relation to healthcare: (1) health education and information; (2) basic healthcare service network; (3) capacity building: training of medical personnel with a focus on producing ethnic medical personnel, gender promotion and provision of qualified medical personnel to localities; (4) promotion of the health of mothers and children; (5) vaccination for women and children; (6) provision of clean water and healthy environment; (7) control of communicable diseases; (8) control of the spread of HIV/AIDS; (9) creation of revolving medical kits funds; (10) control of food and pharmaceutical products to ensure safety for consumers;

(11) promotion of the use of traditional medicines together with modern medicines; (12) strengthening the sustainability of the public health sector.

29. The Government intends to expand the public health network from the central to local levels with a special focus on the grass roots level. Villages and cluster villages are the main targets for public health services. At the same time, private healthcare services are encouraged and have expanded. National pharmaceutical products meet 48 per cent of the national needs.

30. The implementation of the programmes in the public health sector has seen progress and results. The country has 813 healthcare centers while 5,785 villages located far from the existing medical centers have been provided with medical kits. Seventy-seven (77) per cent of the population have access to safe water and 50 per cent of the population have family toilets. The treatment of patients directly by medical personnel produced 92 per cent results. 1,5 million medically treated mosquito nets were distributed to those prone to be affected by malaria. The control of H1N1 and H5N1 influenzas has been carried out properly resulting in their reduced impact in the country.

31. The maternal and child mortality rates have improved. During the period 1995–2005, the under-5 mortality rate dropped from 170 to 98 per 1,000 live births and the infant mortality rate has decreased from 140 to 70 per 100,000 births. Maternal mortality rate has decreased from 650 per 100,000 births in 1995 to 580 in 2000 and to 405 in 2005. Most pregnancy-related deaths occurred around the time of delivery, or soon after a termination. The proportion of births attended by skilled personnel increased (see Tables 8 and 9).

Table 8

Infant and child mortality rates

	1995	2000	2005	2015 target
Under-five mortality rate	170	107	98	80
Infant mortality rate	104	82	70	49
Proportion of 1-year-old children immunized against measles	68	60	69	90

Source: MDG Report 2008.

Table 9

The maternal mortality rate

	1995	2000	2005	2015 target
Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)	650	530	405	260
Proportion of births attended by skilled birth attendants	14 (1994)	17	23	50

Source: MDG Report 2008.

32. The prevalence of population infected with HIV is less than 0.1 % (see Table 10). Lao PDR is surrounded by countries with high HIV prevalence, and is experiencing an increase in mobility of its working-age population within and across its borders, the threat of an expanding HIV epidemic in the country remains real. Major communicable diseases are malaria and tuberculosis (see Table 11). Major communicable and non-communicable diseases are diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, hepatitis B & human influenza B.

Table 10
Universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2015 target
HIV prevalence among general population (%)			0.06 (2001)	0.1 (2007)	<1
HIV prevalence among high-risk group aged 15–24 (%)*			0.4 (2001)	N/A	<5
HIV prevalence among “service women” aged 15–49			0.9 (2001)	2 (2004)	<5
Percentage of condom use among “service women”			N/A	54.4 (2004)	

Source: MDG Report 2008.

33. Ten major causes of death in hospitals in 2006 throughout the country were pneumonia (25.1 per cent), stroke (8.8 per cent), head injury (7.2 per cent), malaria (5.3 per cent), old age (3.2 per cent), injury or accident (2.0 per cent), meningitis (1.6 per cent), road or traffic accident (1.5 per cent), diarrhoea (1.2 per cent), pernicious malaria or cerebral malaria (1.1 per cent) and others (42.9 per cent).

Labour force and job creation

34. The policy of liberalization of investment has brought an increase in the creation of new jobs. In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the unemployment rate is about 1.4 per cent of the workforce nationwide (2005). More than 100,000 people have recently received vocational and skills development training. The Government allows the private sector to build vocational training centres. At present, there are 152 vocational training centres including 60 run by the State and 92 by the private sectors.

35. While the structure of the economy has changed in line with the policy of national modernization and industrialization, that has created enabling conditions for regional integration and competition. (See 18 above). The composition of the workforce has also changed in the direction of the structure of the economy. The workforce in the agricultural sector dropped from 78.6 per cent in 2000 to 76.6 per cent in 2005 while the workforce in industry increased from 6.9 per cent in 2000 to 7.7 per cent in 2005. The workforce in the service sector increased from 14.5 per cent to 15.6 per cent. By 2005 the total workforce in all main sectors increased to 2.71 million.

Culture

36. The Lao Government’s policy on culture is aimed at promoting Lao national culture and building a spiritually civilized Lao society. The Government pays attention to protecting the national culture and preserving and promoting the fine cultures and traditions of all ethnic groups.

37. The Government has been trying to expand cultural activities to the grass roots level through the building of model cultural villages, among other things. In addition to the preservation of cultural sites and national heritage, the multi-ethnic people of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic actively participate in the building of model cultural villages. At the present time, more than 150,000 households have been awarded the status of “cultural households”; more than 580 villages and cluster villages have been awarded the status of cultural villages; and 35 children’s cultural centers have been set up in the country.

38. The Government has expanded the media to localities. Radio and television now cover most parts of the country. Central radio and television and some local stations are broadcast in Lao and some other ethnic dialects.

B. Constitution, politics and legal structures

39. Following independence in 1975 the first Congress of the People's Deputies proclaimed the end of the monarchy and established the Lao People's Democratic Republic with the President as the Head of State, Prime Minister as the Head of Government, and the People's Supreme Council as the representative organ of the rights and interests of the multi-ethnic Lao people. Local councils were established to represent the people in their localities.

40. In 1991, the People's Supreme Council adopted the first Constitution, transforming the country from being governed by instructions to being governed by the Constitution and laws. Based on the principles in the Constitution reflecting the people's will and aspirations, the Lao Government has pursued a policy of building a rule-of-law state. Laws and sub-laws have been adopted since to regulate activities and social relationships in different fields. The Constitution was amended in 2003 in order to meet the needs of the new era of national development.

41. Under the 2003 Constitution, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is an independent and sovereign State which has territorial integrity. It is an indivisible country belonging to all ethnic groups comprising the Lao people as a whole. Lao PDR is a state of people's democracy. All powers belong to the people, and are by the people and for the interests of the Lao multi-ethnic people. The right of the Lao multi-ethnic people as the masters of the country is exercised and ensured through the functioning of the political system with the Lao People's Revolutionary Party as its leading nucleus. The National Assembly (the legislature created under the Constitution replacing the then People's Supreme Council) and other State organs are established and function on the principle of democratic centralism. The State protects the inalienable freedoms and democratic rights of the people.

42. The National Assembly is the representative of the rights and interests of the multi-ethnic Lao people. It is the highest organ of State power as well as the legislative body that adopts the Constitution, laws, makes decisions on national fundamental issues, oversees the acts and performances of the executive organs, the people's courts and the people's prosecutors and ratifies treaties. Under the Constitution, the organisations and persons that have the right to propose draft laws (bills) are as follows: President of the State, National Assembly Standing Committee; the Government; People's Supreme Court; Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor; Lao Front for National Construction and mass organisations at the central level. To date, the National Assembly has passed about 90 laws relating to public administration, judicial, economic, social, cultural and labour matters.

43. The election of deputies to the National Assembly is carried out on the basis of universal, equal, direct suffrage and secret ballots. Voters have the right to propose the dismissal of their representatives if they are found to have behaved in a way unbecoming their honourable positions and to have lost the people's confidence. The election of the current legislature of the National Assembly took place in 2006 with a turnout of 99 per cent. The term of office of each legislature of the National Assembly is 5 years.

44. Female deputies have gradually increased in number. The first legislature consisted of 45 members including 4 females; the second legislature – 79 members, 5 females; the third – 85 members, 8 females; the fourth – 99 members, 21 females; and the fifth – 109 members and 25 females. The present 6th legislature of the National Assembly has 29

female deputies amounting to 27 per cent of the total 115 members of the National Assembly. In addition, a female deputies' caucus has been set up within the National Assembly to enhance gender mainstreaming in this highest State organ. It is expected that the proportion of female deputies in the 7th legislature of the National Assembly will increase to 30 per cent.

45. The President is the Head of State of the Lao People's Democratic Republic representing the multi-ethnic Lao people both within the country and abroad. The President is elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term. The President has the power to make proposals to the National Assembly for approval of the appointment or removal of high-ranking State officials, namely the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers. The Vice-President is assigned to perform the duties on behalf of the President during his absence and at the same time is in charge of other specific duties in accordance with the Constitution and laws. The President has the power to promulgate the laws adopted by the National Assembly, to issue presidential decrees and ordinances, and to promulgate the ratification of treaties.

46. The Government is the executive branch of the State. The Government implements the Constitution, laws and sub-laws, and administers the State's policies in all fields such as political, economic, cultural, social, national defence and security, and foreign affairs. The Government has the power to sign and guide the implementation of treaties and agreements. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government. The Government consists of ministers and chairmen of the ministry-equivalent organizations. The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers are elected by the National Assembly for a five-year term of office. The Government holds regular monthly meetings and may convene extraordinary meetings when needed. Government meetings are chaired by the Prime Minister. The President may chair a government meeting on special occasions or if necessary. The Government is accountable to the President and the National Assembly. The Prime Minister reports on the performances of the Government to the National Assembly. Members of the National Assembly have the right to question the Prime Minister or other Members of the Government on important issues of the country relating to the activities of the executive organs.

47. The people's courts constitute the judicial branch of the State, consisting of the People's Supreme Court; regional people's courts; provincial people's courts, zonal people's courts and the military court. In the event that it is deemed necessary, the National Assembly Standing Committee may decide to establish a special court. The People's Supreme Court in the capacity of the State adjudicative organ administers the people's courts at all levels and examines their verdicts.

48. The system of people's prosecutors consists of the Supreme People's Prosecutor, regional people's prosecutors; provincial people's prosecutors, zonal people's prosecutors and the military prosecutor. The Office of the People's Prosecutor is a State body that has the right to monitor the correct and uniform implementation of laws and regulations by all ministries, ministry-equivalent organisations, organisations attached to the Government, the Lao Front for National Construction, mass organisations, social organisations, local administrations, enterprises, civil servants and citizens. The Office of the People's Prosecutor also exercises the right of public prosecution.

49. Village mediation units have been established for settling disputes among villagers thus reducing the number of cases in the courts. A village mediation unit comprises the village chief, a village security member, each member from the Village Front, Youth Union, Women's Union. The village mediation system functions as the informal justice sector to settle minor disputes.

50. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is the country with a mixed system of civil and socialist legal traditions with a predominance of civil law. In 1993, the Government issued a Decree on the Hierarchy of Legal Acts of Lao PDR to serve as a reference for the State, mass and social organizations in proposing draft laws/legal acts within their fields. In 2003, the President issued a Presidential Ordinance on the Making of Legal Instruments, which sets out the hierarchy of legal instruments and official documents in Lao PDR as follows:

1. The Constitution.
2. Laws passed by the National Assembly.
3. Resolutions of the National Assembly.
4. Resolutions and Recommendations of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly.
5. Presidential Ordinances and Decrees.
6. Resolutions and Decrees of the Government.
7. Decrees, Decisions, Orders and Recommendations of the Prime Minister.
8. Decisions, Orders, Instructions and Notifications of Ministers, Chairmen of Ministry-equivalent Organizations, Heads of the Organizations attached to the Government, the President of People's Supreme Court, Supreme People's Prosecutor, Provincial Governors, Capital City Mayor, Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, District Chiefs and Municipality Mayors.
9. Village regulations.

51. In 2009, the President issued a Presidential Ordinance on the Making, Participation in and Implementation of International Treaties in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The Ordinance sets forth the rules and procedures for negotiations on treaties, signing, ratifying, accession, implementation, monitoring and reporting of treaties. The Ordinance has clearly defined the status of treaties in the Lao legal system. Especially, the Ordinance provides that: (a) the enactment of the law, sub-laws, regulations shall not prejudice the obligations of the Lao PDR under treaties to which it is a party; (b) treaty the provisions of which are not consistent with laws adopted by NA or not yet reflected in laws shall be transformed into domestic law to become nationally effective; (c) in case of conflict between domestic law and treaty, the latter prevails, but such treaty prevalence over domestic law must be consistent with the national Constitution and reservations made by Lao PDR; (d) treaties that are already consistent with the Constitution of the Lao PDR and laws may be directly applicable. Today, the Lao PDR is a party to hundreds of international legal instruments, including multilateral, regional and bilateral treaties and agreements. Over the past years, the Lao PDR has put efforts into transforming treaty obligations into national legislation with progress achieved in many aspects. The adoption of the Presidential Ordinance enables the Lao PDR to more effectively and successfully implement its international legal obligations.

2. General framework for the promotion and protection of human rights

A. Acceptance of international human rights norms

52. Of the core United Nations human rights treaties, the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a party to six conventions and two protocols: the International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The two protocols are the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Lao PDR has also signed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Lao PDR is also a party to other conventions in the field of promotion and protection of human rights such as the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery; the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid; the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitation to War Crimes; and Crimes Against Humanity and the Convention on the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.

53. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a State Party to other conventions relating to human rights and humanitarian law such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the two additional protocols, namely the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of the Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I) and Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-international Armed Conflicts (Protocol II). In addition, the Lao PDR is also a party to nine conventions under the International Labour Organization (Conventions Nos. 4, 6, 13, 29, 100, 111, 138, 144, 182). At present, the Lao PDR is in the progress of consideration of other ILO core conventions. The country is a party to the Palermo Convention and its three Protocols. The Lao PDR is party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. As a war-torn country, the Lao PDR has actively participated and played an important role in the drafting process of Convention on Cluster Munitions, which was ratified by the Lao PDR shortly after the signing. The Lao PDR successfully hosted the First Conference of State Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Vientiane in 2010.

54. The Lao People's Democratic Republic became a Member of ASEAN in 1997 and chaired ASEAN in 2004 when it successfully hosted the 10th ASEAN Summit. The Lao PDR is a party to numerous ASEAN Agreements, including the Treaty on Amity and Cooperation in South East Asia and the ASEAN Charter (being the fourth country to ratify the ASEAN Charter). The ASEAN Charter (Article 14) provides for the establishment of an ASEAN human rights body. The Lao PDR actively contributed to the drafting of the Terms of Reference of the established ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).

55. Among the human rights conventions to which the Lao People's Democratic Republic is party, the Lao PDR has not entered reservations and/or declarations except with regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Arts. 1, 18 and 22). The Government of the Lao PDR is willing to adhere to universal human rights standards set forth in these conventions and implement them in good faith, bearing in mind the national context and reality of the Lao PDR. In the implementation of human rights treaties the Lao PDR has never suspended treaty provisions.

56. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has undergone the Human Rights Council universal periodic review (UPR). Of the total of 107 recommendations made for the Lao PDR, 71 recommendations were accepted in full, 15 recommendations were accepted in

part, while 21 recommendations did not enjoy the Lao PDR's support for they do not reflect the realities in the country or the country at this stage is not ready to implement them.

B. The general legal framework within which human rights are protected at the national level

57. The Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Chapter IV) clearly provides for the fundamental rights and duties of Lao citizens (Article 34 to article 51). In particular, Lao citizens are equal before the law regardless of their gender, social status, education, beliefs and ethnic group (Article 34); Lao citizens of both genders enjoy equal rights in the political, economic, cultural and social fields and in family affairs (Art. 37). The Constitution of the Lao PDR provides for the rights to vote and stand for election, the right to education, the right to work, the right to health care, the right to recreation, freedom of movement and residence, the right to petition, complaint and expression of opinion to the organs concerned, the right to physical inviolability, dignity and housing, the freedom to believe or not to believe in religion, the right to freedom of speech, press, assembly, association and to stage demonstrations which are not contrary to the laws, the right to freedom of scientific research, application of scientific and technical achievements and technologies, the rights to artistic and literature creativity and to engage in activities which are not contrary to the laws. Aliens and stateless persons are protected by the law of the Lao PDR.

58. The National Assembly has so far adopted more than 90 laws including those directly or indirectly related to human rights promotion and protection such as the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children, Law on the Development and Protection of Women, Law on Nationality, Law on Family, Law on Complaints, Criminal Law, Law on Criminal Procedure, Law on the People's Courts, Law on People's Prosecutors, Law on the Election of the National Assembly Deputies, Labour Law, Law on Trade Union, Law on Education, Law on Food, Law on Medical Treatment, Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Care, Law on Mass Media, Law on the Lao Front for National Construction, Law on Consumer Protection, etc.

59. The implementation of human rights treaties to which the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a party in the Lao PDR involves the transformation of treaty obligations into specific national legislation. Thus the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been transformed into the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children, the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women have been transformed into the Law on the Development and Protection of Women, while the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination have been transformed into the Criminal Law. Provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights find reflection in the National Constitution and relevant laws of the Lao PDR. In addition to laws adopted by the National Assembly there are numerous legal instruments issued by the President of the Republic, the Government, Ministries, Ministry-equivalent Organisations and Local Administrations. The sub-laws which directly implement human rights are the Prime Minister's Decree on the Management of Religious Activities and the Prime Minister's Decree on Associations. The Government is in the final stage of drafting a Decree on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to implement the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

60. The national mechanisms that deal with human rights protection include the National Assembly's Department of Petitions and Nationality Affairs, the People's Courts and the Office of the People's Prosecutor. The remedial processes for human rights

violations are stipulated in the Law on Complaints, the Law on Criminal Procedure and other relevant laws. If a person is not happy with the decision by a court concerning his or her case, the person has a right to appeal that extends through the appellate courts to the People's Supreme Court. As a rule, the decision of the People's Supreme Court is final. However, there is still the opportunity for the person not happy with the People's Supreme Court's decision to seek justice from the National Assembly through the Department of Petitions and Nationality Affairs.

61. The People's Court is the adjudicative body of the State and has jurisdiction to try offences against the law, including actions by the executive organs that infringe upon the rights and dignity of the citizens. The Criminal Law specifies offences against the rights and freedoms of citizens (chapter 3), which include duress, unlawful arrest and detention, abduction and trafficking in human beings, violation of individual freedoms of speech, association, trespassing of residence, violation of personal privacy, the obstruction of the right to vote and to stand for election, and forgery or destruction of election documents. The amended Criminal Law (2005) incorporates obligations of the Lao People's Democratic Republic under international human rights treaties. The amendments criminalize acts discriminating against members of ethnic groups and women, and human trafficking. Family and juvenile chambers have been established in the People's Courts for dealing with cases concerning juvenile and family matters.

62. The Office of the People's Prosecutor monitors the proper application of law by the investigation and interrogation authorities and the People's Courts aimed at ensuring justice in the proceedings as well as protecting human rights of the accused. The Office of the People's Prosecutor is also assigned with the responsibility for justice in juvenile cases, including the application of non-custodial measures for children.

63. The Lao Bar Association (LBA) started to play an increasing role in the justice system of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The LBA provides legal assistance to accused persons in criminal cases, including the provision of free legal aid for the poor. A legal aid clinic has been set up by the LBA to provide free legal services to the poor whose rights are breached.

64. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic legal system, the people's courts do not directly apply treaty provisions in adjudicating cases. The practice in the past however has been that the people's courts apply domestic law, in harmony with the treaty obligations assumed by the country.

65. A number of institutional arrangements have been put in place in the country to deal with the supervision of the implementation of human rights treaties. Inter-agency arrangements have been established which include the National Commission for Mothers and Children, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, the National Steering Committee on the International Covenants on Human Rights, the National Steering Committee on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the National Committee on Persons with Disabilities, the National Steering Committee on Anti Human Trafficking and the National Steering Committee on the Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

66. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic the Lao Front for National Construction and mass organizations also play a vital role in human rights protection. The mass organizations include the Lao Women's Union, the Lao Youth Union, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions, and the Lao Federation of War Veterans. The Lao Front for National Construction is the political organization that forges solidarity among all ethnic groups, religions and social strata in the Lao PDR. The Lao Front, among other tasks, is concerned with the protection of human rights of all ethnic groups, and religious freedoms. The Lao Women's Union as a mass organization mobilizes all Lao women to participate in the

national development and poverty reduction among women. The Lao Women's Union has the following specific tasks: to meet the development needs of Lao women, to promote the status and role of women, to promote the solidarity among women of all ethnic groups and all strata. The Lao Federation of Trade Unions as a mass organization protects the rights and interests of working people in the Lao PDR, including the rights to work, fair working conditions, trade union rights and social security. The Lao Youth Union as a mass organization has the tasks of protecting the rights and interests of the youth so that they fully develop their potential to contribute to the national development of the country. The Lao Youth Union is concerned, among other things, with the protection of young people from falling victims of human trafficking and giving appropriate assistance to such victims. The Lao Federation of War Veterans protects the rights and interests of those who sacrificed themselves for the liberation and protection of the country.

C. The general framework within which human rights are promoted at the national level

67. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic attaches importance to the promotion of human rights with the understanding that increased awareness of human rights and human dignity among government officials as well as throughout the Lao society contributes to the respect for human rights and reduces violations. The established institutional inter-agency arrangements as mentioned earlier are vested with the task of promoting human rights under their mandate. In addition, each line ministry and institution has established a human rights focal point consisting of 2–5 officials who are responsible for, among other things, the promotion of human rights under the Constitution, laws and international treaties relevant to the work of their ministry/institution. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Human Rights Division under the Department of Treaties and Law acts as the focal point on human rights inter-ministerial coordination. With the support of the International Law Project (www.ilp.gov.la), which is initiated by UNDP and funded by the Government of Finland and the EU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been actively conducting dissemination of the human rights treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party as well the treaties under consideration by the Lao PDR to different target groups, including government officials, National Assembly members, judges, prosecutors, police officers at the central and local levels, lawyers, academics, researchers, students, members of mass and civil society organizations and the public at large. The International Law Project has been so successful that the UNDP Regional Centre based in Bangkok has made a case study of this successful human rights project. All core human rights treaties and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been translated into the Lao language. Two volumes (Volume I and Volume II) on human rights treaties have been produced and widely disseminated; numerous seminars and workshops on different human rights themes have been organized throughout the country.

68. Among the major events in awareness-raising of human rights in Lao society was the commemoration of the 50th and 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998 and 2008 respectively. Particular mention should be made of the 2008 Grand Ceremony co-chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Lao People's Democratic Republic to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration with more than 1,300 attendees.

69. The dissemination of human rights information has been actively carried out also by other organizations such as the Lao Women's Union and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, the National Commission for Mother and Child, and the National Committee on Persons with Disabilities. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has also set up the

Information Centre on the rights of the child. The Office of the People's Prosecutors advocates for, among other things, juvenile justice. The Lao Bar Association disseminates information on human rights among members of different ethnic groups. The Lao Disabled People's Association advocates human rights and disability rights. The Human Rights Centre under the National Academy of Social Sciences conducts research on human rights and organizes workshops on different human rights themes. A Human Rights Unit has been set up in the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the National University of Laos with the aim of integrating the teaching of human rights in the Faculty's curriculum. The Ministry of Education has been working on a textbook on human rights education to be used in schools.

70. The media including the State and privately run newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio programmes play an increasing role in human rights promotion through disseminating information on human rights under the Constitution and laws as well as human rights treaties. Special TV and Radio programmes are run to promote women's rights and the rights of children.

71. The Lao People's Democratic Republic does not have an independent human rights institution as per the Paris principles. However, the existing institutional arrangements and mechanisms have been gradually strengthened and are most suitable for the promotion and protection of human rights at this stage of the country's development and realities. Non-governmental organizations have been established in the form of social and professional organizations. With the adoption of the Prime Minister's Decree on Associations, civil society organizations will be increased in number and will further contribute to national socio-economic development and poverty reduction, and to promoting the human rights of the Lao people of all ethnic groups. At present, about 160 INGOs are active in assisting the Lao People's Democratic Republic in the different fields of national development.

D. The role of the reporting process in the promotion of human rights at the national level

72. In the process of drafting reports under human rights conventions as well as the universal periodic review under the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has paid attention to the participation by all stakeholders including relevant government agencies, and mass, social, professional, academic and research organizations. The institutional inter-agency arrangements mentioned elsewhere in this report are all tasked with the supervision of preparation of reports under respective human rights treaties. Taking an active part in the process of drafting reports under human right treaties and the UPR, including this common core document, were representatives of the non-state actors, namely the Lao Front for National Construction, the Lao Women's Union, the Lao Youth Union, the Lao Federation of Trade Unions, the Lao Bar Association, the Lao Disabled People's Association, the Human Rights Centre of the National Academy of Social Sciences, the National University of Laos and other social and professional organizations and foundations. International organizations, and international non-governmental organizations based in the Lao PDR have had the opportunity to comment on draft reports under human rights treaties and the UPR. Notably, experts from the respective treaty bodies have been invited to facilitate in workshops organized to discuss draft reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Lao PDR intends to invite an expert from the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Rights of

Disabled Persons to be lead resource person for the upcoming workshops to discuss the draft reports under the respective treaties.

73. In the process of drafting reports on human rights, collection of data and information was conducted from the central to the local level. Interviews of concerned groups were conducted. By way of example, in the drafting of the reports under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, first-hand data and information was collected from the people living in different provinces; as for reporting under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the collection of information was conducted from the central to local level including field visits to major development projects that impact on the livelihood of local communities.

74. The national reports under human rights treaties and the UPR, as well as the concluding observations, comments and recommendations of the respective treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council are published in the Lao language, which is the official language in the country, and are widely disseminated in the society. The Government pays great attention to the follow-up on the recommendations of treaty bodies and of the Human Rights Council with regard to the UPR. Consultations, seminars and workshops on follow-up are organized with the active participation of government ministries, and mass and civil society organizations.

75. The participatory approach in the human rights reporting process, the publication of the national reports on human rights, as well as the action taken by the Government in the follow-up on treaty bodies' recommendations and the recommendations under the UPR through workshops, seminars and consultations have effectively contributed to further raising awareness of human rights in the Lao society, contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights in the country.

E. Other information on human rights

76. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic has actively cooperated with the international community in different fields related to the promotion and protection of human rights. In particular, the Government attaches importance to the implementation of the World Conferences, including the World Summit for Children (1990), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), International Conference on Population and Development (1994), the World Summit for Social Development (1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the Second United Nations Conference on Habitat (1996), the United Nations Millennium Summit (2000) and the follow-up Summits (2005) and (2010), the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2001), the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (2001), the World Business Summit on Climate Change (2009) etc.

77. The Beijing Platform for Action has been integrated into policies and actions in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, which resulted in the establishment of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women. The Government adopted the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2006–2010) consisting of five Plans of Action. The period 2009–2010 is the concluding year of the implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2006–2010). The National Commission for the Advancement of Women is reviewing and assessing the outcome of each Plan of Action implementation and will improve the contents of the strategy for promotion of women's advancement to turn them into a new strategy for 2011–2015 in line with the 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

78. The realization of human rights for the Lao people is being achieved through the implementation of the outcome of the Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (2000), particularly the national endeavours to achieve the MDGs. The Lao People's Democratic Republic has already submitted its two reports on the implementation of the MDGs. The second report was on the Mid-Term Review of the progress in achieving the MDGs by the Lao PDR. Since the first report, the Lao PDR has been able to continually maintain the economic growth rates. Economic growth is a main factor for the eradication of poverty. While the Lao PDR has made great progress and there is a high possibility of reaching the target of the MDGs on primary education and the reduction of infant mortality, there are still challenges in the way of achieving other targets set in the MDGs, particularly the elimination of hunger. The implementation of MDGs is interrelated and mutually reinforcing with the implementation of the human rights treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party.

F. Non-discrimination and equality

79. In pursuing a policy of promotion and protection of human rights, the Government attaches great importance to the principles of non-discrimination and equality which are enshrined in the Constitution and laws. Article 35 of the Constitution provides that "all Lao citizens, irrespective of gender, social status, level of education, religious beliefs and ethnicity are equal before the law". Article 34 of the Constitution provides that "any person holding Lao nationality is considered a Lao citizen as defined in law". Lao nationality is acquired at birth, by grant and on other grounds as defined in Articles 11 to 14 of the Law on Lao Nationality. Persons other than Lao citizens in the Lao People's Democratic Republic also have protection of rights and obligations on the basis of the Constitution and the laws of the Lao PDR. In particular, Article 50 of the Constitution states that "aliens and stateless persons also have the rights to protection of their rights and freedoms as defined in the laws of the Lao PDR, to lodge their complaints to the courts and agencies concerned of the Lao PDR, and have obligations to respect the Lao PDR constitution and laws".

80. Article 6 of the Law on People's Courts, guarantees equality of all before the law: "all Lao citizens are equal before the Law and Courts regardless of origin, social and economic status, race, ethnicity, language, sex, education, occupation, religion, residence and others". Article 6 of the Law on the Criminal Procedure provides that "... the judgment on a criminal case shall be made on the basis of equality of all Lao citizens before the Law and Courts regardless of their origin, social and economic status, race, ethnicity, language, sex, religion, education, occupation, residence and others. The People's Courts shall create conditions for people, particularly the defendants, offenders and accused in civil cases to exercise their rights in order to secure the correct and objective proceedings"; The Law on Civil Procedure provides in Article 3 that "only the court has the jurisdiction over a civil case and the judgment shall be made on the basis of Lao citizens' equality"; Article 6 of the same law provides for all citizens' equality before the law and court: "the civil proceedings shall be carried out on the ground of equality of all citizens before the law and court without any discrimination as to sex, race, ethnicity, social and economic status, language, education, occupation, belief, residence and others. The people's court shall create conditions for citizens, in particular for litigants, to exercise their rights to equality in order to secure that the proceedings be carried out duly and objectively".

81. Gender equality and non-discrimination are detailed in the Law on the Development and Protection of Women. Article 13 of the Law states that "Gender equality is parity in self-development; women and men have the same value and opportunities in the political economic, socio-cultural fields and in the family, defense and security matters and foreign affairs as provided in the Constitution and laws".

82. Equality and non-discrimination among ethnic groups are guaranteed in the Constitution and laws. All the 49 ethnic groups are equal before the law. The Constitution of the Lao People's Democratic Republic provides in Article 8 that: "the State pursues a policy of solidarity and equality among the ethnic groups. All ethnic groups have the right to maintain and develop their fine customs, traditions and culture of the country and their own communities. The acts of divisions and discriminations between ethnic groups are prohibited". The Criminal Law contains provisions criminalizing the offence of discrimination against ethnic groups and the offence of division of solidarity among ethnic groups (Article 66 and Article 176).

83. The Government pays particular attention to guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination against people with disabilities, many of whom are victims of unexploded ordnance (UXO), cluster munitions and other war remnants. The Government encourages favourable conditions to be created for people with disabilities to exercise their rights on a basis of equality with others in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the nation. Disabled people receive support from the State and society in tackling issues facing them like healthcare, rehabilitation, occupations and the exercise of their other rights in accordance with the law. A sub-law on the rights of people with disabilities is in the process of making in the form of a Prime Minister's Decree, which, once adopted, will be a legal basis which sets forth detailed rules and procedures to effectively ensure the disability rights in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.
