

Officials satisfied with human rights compliance

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Government officials are satisfied with the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) after it ratified the covenant last year.

They gathered at a seminar on Friday in Vientiane to review the implementation of the covenant for common understanding regarding the country's obligation as a party in implementing the covenant.

The covenant is one of the UN's core human rights treaties. It obliges state bodies to undertake steps to progressively achieve full realisation of this set of rights, including, among others, the right to work, the right to education, the right to basic health care, and the right to adequate food, clothing and housing.

State parties to the covenant have an obligation to report on the implementation of the treaty to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The initial report by Laos is due in June 2009.

The ICESCR together with its sister treaty, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitute the so-called International Bill of Rights that has inspired the constitutions and legal systems of countries around the world.

The Lao constitution provides for the equal rights of men and women in political, economic, social, cultural and family life.

Director General of the Treaty and Law Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Khamkheuang Bounteum, said Laos has already signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the National Assembly is in the process of ratifying the covenant.

"In the ratification process, a country always thinks about

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FROM PAGE 1

its ability to implement the covenant, including its reporting capacity, based on the interests of the people and the nation," he said.

He said the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights conformed with the government's policy to develop the nation and bring prosperity to all Lao people without discrimination.

The covenant is also in line with the implementation of the Party's policy, constitution and the country's laws, as well as socio-economic development and poverty reduction.

The implementation of



Mr Khamkheuang Bounteum.

the covenant is related to almost all sectors, including ministries, the National Assembly, mass organisations and civil society.

Participants at the seminar, who came from all relevant sectors, shared information on the socio-economic development that creates conditions for, facilitates, and promotes the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the covenant.

The seminar was hosted by the International Law Project and supported by the government of Finland, the European Union and the UN Development Programme.

The meeting was also part of activities to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.