



## Lao National Human Rights Seminar Discusses implementation of UPR Recommendations

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) organized the inaugural Lao PDR National Human Rights Seminar in Vientiane on Wednesday 16 February. The Seminar was devoted exclusively to the implementation of the Recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the Lao PDR.

The Seminar was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Alounkeo Kittikhoun, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Rolf Timans, Head of Human Rights Unit, European External Action Service EEAS, European Union and Madam Kyoko Yokosuka, Acting Resident Representative of the UNDP, Laos.



Mr. Rolf Timans, H.E Mr. Alounkeo Kittikhoun and Mrs Kyoko Yokosuka

The Seminar was attended by over 150 participants including senior government officials, several ambassadors and senior diplomats representing their various countries, civil society, academic bodies and the media.



The Seminar was held a day before the annual Human Rights Dialogue between the European Union and the Lao PDR. It provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions on the main UPR issues and the next steps in UPR implementation by the Lao PDR.



The UPR is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 UN Member States once every four years. The review is conducted by other states with the active participation and involvement of the state reviewed. The Lao PDR went through the review process in May last year and the result of its participation was adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on September last year in Geneva, Switzerland.





In all, the review made 107 recommendations for consideration by the Lao PDR. The Lao PDR supported or accepted 71 of the Recommendations in full and 15 in part, but did not support the remaining 21 Recommendations.

In opening the seminar, His Excellency Mr. Alounkeo Kittikhoun, said ‘the UPR is designed to engage all UN members to a constructive dialogue on human rights based on the principles of objectivity, non-selectivity, avoidance of double standards, and non-politicisation with a view to having a better understanding of human rights practices in UN member states and to improving and enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights globally and nationally in accordance with the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Treaties, as well as the National Constitutions and Laws.’





Prof. Sam Blay, Chief Technical Specialist, International Law Project

He also noted that the Lao PDR used the UPR as an ‘opportunity to inform the world of the country’s consistent policies, national laws and actions, and also the achievements thus far made by the country in the promotion and protection of human rights of the Lao people of all ethnic groups, and to learn from other countries’ best practices on human rights implementation through the constructive engagement with the UN Human Rights Council Members and observers during the review sessions in Geneva.’



H.E Mr. Yong Chanthalangsy the Lao Ambassador and Permanent Representative to UN office in Geneva

In his opening remarks, Mr. Rolf Timans, Head of Human Rights Unit EEAS of the European Union said that the ‘concept of the UPR is a significant innovation in the



field of multilateral human rights’ and that the European Union places ‘great importance’ on it. He also said the European Union welcomes the fact that Laos accepted several important recommendations from the UPR process.

In her opening remarks Madam Kyoko Yokosuka, the Acting UNDP Resident representative in Laos said the implementation of the UPR Recommendations is a critical element in the UPR process. She also noted that ‘without effective implementation, the Recommendations accepted gain no meaning and the participation of the Lao PDR in the UPR process will mean little to the country and the international community. On the other hand, the effective implementation of the Recommendations provides an important platform for the Lao PDR to promote and protect human rights both in accordance with its national constitution and international obligations’.

The seminar heard presentations from national and international experts on several aspects of the implementation of the UPR Recommendations by the Lao PDR. His Excellency Yong Chanthalangsy the Lao Ambassador and Permanent Representative to Geneva highlighted the main issues raised by the Recommendations while Madam Viengvone Kittavong the Acting Director General from the Department of Treaties and Law spoke about the steps towards the adoption of a national action plan to implement the recommendations.



A member of the European Union Delegation spoke about the European experience in the implementation of the Recommendations and the lessons for the Lao PDR. Mr. Vongvilai Thiphalangsy, Acting Director, Human Rights Division, Department of treaties and Law gave an analysis of the cost of implementing the UPR Recommendations and noted that The Lao PDR will welcome assistance from its development partners and donors.

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