



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

**MESSAGE OF MR. YURY FEDOTOV, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNODC ON
OCCASION OF THE HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE MEETING
IN VIENTIANE, LAO PDR, 20-21 OCTOBER 2010.**

I would like to congratulate the Government of the Lao PDR for the coordinated process in developing the 7th National Socio-economic Plan and for organising this High Level Round Table meeting in its support. The goal of graduating from the ranks of least developed country through a socio-economic plan that puts growth with equity as its guiding principle is commendable, so is the recognition that illicit drugs and related problems are an important and critical cross cutting issue.

I am particularly pleased to hear about the establishment and active involvement of the Illicit Drug Sector Working Group as one of eight Government groups supporting this process. The fact that the Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Bouasone Buphavanh, is the Chair of the National Drug Control Committee underlines the strong political commitment of the Government of the Lao PDR to address the challenges from illicit drugs.

Since 1989, UNODC has supported the efforts of the Government of the Lao PDR to provide alternative development assistance to reach the unreached. This assistance directly supports the Government's efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by supporting enabling infrastructure for MDG achievement, introducing new sustainable livelihood options for improved food security and environmental sustainability, supporting schools and teachers to ensure universal access to basic education, supporting gender equality and empowerment of women through community development and village savings and credit schemes, improving maternal and child health, providing safe water and improved sanitation in very remote mountainous former opium poppy cultivating communities.

UNODC shares the concern felt by the Illicit Drug Sector Working Group that illicit drugs and related problems such as increased trafficking, abuse, violence, crime and corruption poses a serious threat to national socio-economic development and the rule of law. We have seen how illicit drug based organized crime networks can corrupt and totally undermine the development and integrity of nations and deprive their citizens of dignity and hope.

UNODC is also concerned and is closely monitoring the increase in illicit opium poppy cultivation and drug abuse. I would like to strongly urge the Government and the international community to scale up efforts to reduce poverty, ensure food security and expand provisions of alternative livelihood options. Only 10% of the 1,100 priority former opium poppy cultivating villages in northern Laos has received alternative development assistance.

The fact that more than 50% of the population of the Lao PDR are youth below the age of 20 makes the country even more vulnerable to the increased

trafficking and availability of Amphetamine Type Stimulants ATS and heroin. We can all agree that Illicit drugs poses a serious threat to youth who are the future of the country. UNODC has supported Government efforts to provide new hope, self esteem and a second chance to drug users through prevention, evidence based treatment, and vocational training programmes. Other programmes address Injecting Drug Use and HIV as well as human trafficking.

I would like to congratulate the Lao Government authorities for the significant seizures made this year of over 21,800,000 tables of methamphetamine and over 2.8 tons of cannabis. This seizure, however, also highlights how vulnerable to transit trafficking this country is because of its location at the hub of the Greater Mekong Sub Region.

I am pleased that the Government of the Lao PDR has, with the support of UNODC, been able to endorse a new National Drug Control Master Plan. I believe that international partners can help development efforts by giving every assistance possible to ensure successful implementation of this Drug Control Master Plan. At the same time UNODC stands ready to provide help to strengthen criminal justice responses and legislative measures that are essential to accelerate the expansion of appropriate regulatory frameworks on governance and rule of law for the benefit the Lao people.

I would like to reaffirm UNODC commitment to continue support to Government of the Lao PDR in the mobilization of resources and effective implementation of the National Drug Control Master Plan through the Illicit Drug Sector Working Group process. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my best wishes to the Government of the Lao PDR and the Lao people for a successful round table meeting and in all your endeavours to build a prosperous, just and drug free nation.

Thank you.