

# **Efforts of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Combating Human Trafficking**

( Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime Senior Officials' Meeting, 24-25 February 2009, Brisbane, Australia)

Mr. Co-chair,  
Distinguished Delegates,

First of I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Australia and IOM for having provided support to enable the participation of my delegation in this Meeting.

It is a great pleasure and honor to inform the Meeting that since the Lao PDR's accession to the Palermo Convention and its supplementing Protocols in 2003 the Lao Government has made a lot of efforts, to the best of its capacity and with valuable support provided by the donor community, to combat human trafficking.

The Inter-ministerial National Steering Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, with its Secretariat at the Ministry of Public Security, was set up in 2004 to be assigned a mandate to instruct the matter on human trafficking and to supervise the coordination of the enforcement of related laws, the implementation of relevant international conventions as well as other regional and national instruments, including the MOU, Plan of Action of the so-called Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Persons ( COMMIT) among the Greater Mekong Sub-regional countries, and the National Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons, which is under the process of the Government's approval.

To ensure our anti-trafficking measures to be effective and coordinated, the Lao Government has strengthened bilateral cooperation through actively implementing the bilateral Plan of Action under the Lao-Thai Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which was signed in 2005, and the Lao-Australian Memorandum of Understanding on ARTIP.

The Lao Government also sought collaboration with Vietnam on counter-trafficking issues in 2008, the outcome of which led to the preparation and working towards signing an MOU on Collaboration on Combating Human Trafficking.

To raise awareness and to strengthen the capacity among agencies and administrative authorities at central and local levels, many information sharing and collecting activities have been conducted; a national workshop on combating trafficking in persons was conducted ; and the network of anti-people trafficking units have been expanded to all affected provinces.

To further enhance our capacity in combating human trafficking, the Government officials have actively participated in trainings, meetings and workshops at various levels, including the attending of the COMMIT Regional Training Program on Human Trafficking with officials from other Mekong sub-regional countries in Khon Ken, Thailand ,which is highly beneficial for the Lao Government officials and the knowledge gained from the training has significantly contributed to the work of combating human trafficking.

The Lao Woman Union Counseling and Protection Center for Women and Children was opened in January 2006 to secure victims of trafficking and victims of domestic violence and sexual exploitation at least three months of counseling, recovery and vocational training.

To ensure a more holistic and rights-based approach to the provision of care and assistance to victims of human trafficking, the Lao PDR is currently developing its National Victim Protection Guidelines .

The National Plan of Action on Commercial and Sexual Exploitation of Children was also worked out and adopted in 2007 and it is in the process of the implementation.

The great and important event to be informed is the hosting of the 6<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting of COMMIT of the Government of the Lao PDR in November 2008 which reflected firm and unwavering statement of the Greater Mekong Sub-region counties to combat human in all its forms.

Our country has also adopted some legislative measures, namely (1) the Law on the Development and Protection of Woman was adopted in 2004, which

contains provisions concerning prohibition and punishment of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, (2) the Criminal Law was amended in 2005 with the new provisions concerning criminalization of trafficking in persons, (3) the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Benefits of Children has been adopted in 2006.

There have been a dozen of cases of trafficking in persons to be investigated with some perpetrators prosecuted and many of victims have been rescued and repatriated.

Thank you.