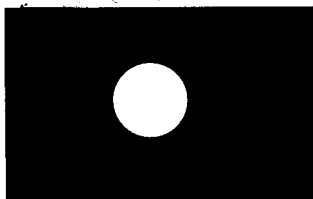


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PEACE INDEPENDENCE DEMOCRACY UNITY PROSPERITY



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC TO THE  
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Statement  
by  
H.E. Dr. **Kithong** Vongsay  
Vice Chairman of the State Planning Committee  
of the Lao P.D.R.,  
Head of the Lao Delegation  
at the **21<sup>st</sup>** Special Session of the United Nations  
General Assembly

New York, 1 July 1999

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Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed an honor for me to attend this important special Session of the UN General Assembly, devoted to population and Development issue. On behalf of the government of the Lao PDR, I should like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to H.E. Mr. **Kofi Annan**, our Secretary-General, for exerting every effort in convening this special Session of the UN General Assembly. The Lao government and people highly salute the important contribution made by the world organization and all the peace and justice loving countries in finding a political solution to the Kosovo tragedy which has inflicted untold sufferings on innocent people there .

Mr. President, My Delegation is convinced that, under your guise and able leadership, this important Special Session will be crowned with success.

Five years have elapsed since the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development. The time has come now to review and appraise in a comprehensive manner the implementation of this important Conference's Programme of Action. At the Hague International Forum, held in the Netherlands's Capital in February this year, we already had the opportunity to assess the progress made to date, examine the problems and obstacles encountered and produce a set of practical actions to implement effectively and diligently the judicious recommendations of that far-reaching Programme of Action.

As we all know, the population is a focal point in a sustainable development of the world. However, integration of the population policy into the socioeconomic development plans is a new challenged area for my country. Therefore, education and training on this subject is an urgent need for not only the governmental officials, but also for all people in the society in order to create greater awareness among themselves.

People are viewed as the most valuable resource, and a critical factor in the country's development. With this in view and in responding to ICPD POA and Bali Declaration, the government of Lao P.D.R. has consistently

placed considerable attention to population and development issues. It also **recognises** clearly that there exists, a close linkage between population, environment and **poverty**. This commitment can be seen in various efforts and concerned population programs made by the government. These efforts were shown in activities carried out through improvement and upgrading the living conditions of the population by expanding the access to economic infrastructure, education, culture and health care provided to all segments of the population. These efforts have also effected in the promotion of democracy, self-determination and full national participation among the people in order to enable them to play a central role in the development.

In the same context, the government of Lao P.D.R. has set the goals with firm determination to move out of the state of under-development by the year 2020 with the following vision: the material and cultural living conditions of the people should be stabilized with higher quality of life, the population will be ensured to some extent with educational opportunities and health services; the fine tradition and culture of the nation will be enriched and developed. In other words, basic social welfare benefits will be generally ensured, the country will enjoy expanded international relations and cooperation, will be well integrated with global trends and will build a solid foundation of peace, independence, democracy, unity, and prosperity.

A resolution taken during the Sixth Party Congress in 1996 called for the active implementation of the population policies to make the population growth correspond to the level of economic development. It is also to upgrade the level of knowledge of the multi-ethnic people, and to create a professional labor force and individuals with capacity to meet the urgent need of national development in the immediate future, and to solve various social problems concurrently with economic expansion. Thus, gradually an advanced, socially just, society will be created.

Following the principles of the ICPD-POA endorsed by General Assembly resolution 49/128; the Lao government with the support of UNFPA is formulating a comprehensive reproductive health policy which is one the two major sub-programms supported by that organization. This second one is titled Population and Development Strategy. To ensure sustainability of the programme and effective utilization of the' financial and technical assistance, a National Committee for Coordination has been set up, using the State Planning Committee as the focal point.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank UNFPA for the continuous support and advice to the government of the Lao P.D.R..

The Lao government recognizes the importance of the reproductive health and understands its concept, which although of general concern, is of special importance for women, particularly during the reproductive years.

Great attention had also been paid to the health care for mothers and children by adopting the National Birth Spacing policy in 1995. In order to prevent the growing risk of **HIV/AIDS** epidemics, the Lao P.D.R. government established a national committee for control of AIDS,- a governmental body coordinating health promotion strategies on the prevention of sexual transmission of **HIV** from now to the year 2000.

For-the adolescent **reproductive** health, despite special concerns about the health risks of young people calling for urgent actions, little efforts have been made so far, leaving them without much information and guidance on reproductive health and sexual responsibility and access to health care and counseling. Nevertheless, some strategies have been formulated to address the reproductive health needs of adolescents and 'young people. However, much remains to be done in future. The Lao Government will do its best to reduce the Lao women's mortality ratio in their reproductive age from 656/100.000 persons in 1993 to :490/100.000 persons in the year 2000; 250/100.000 persons in the year 2010; 130/100.000 persons in the year 2020. Lao fertility rate of 5.6 and infant mortality rate of 104 per 1.000 live births (figure of 1995) are rather high by South-east Asian standard.

The issues of gender equity and equality and empowerment of women are clearly guaranteed in the legal system. \*For instance, article 24 and 27 of the Constitution declare that Lao citizens of both sexes have equal rights in political, economic, cultural and social fields and family affairs, and Lao citizens have the freedom of settlement and movement as provided by law. Therefore, development efforts should be concerned with equity as well as growth. Women should not be disadvantaged in terms of legal rights, economic opportunity, and access to government services.

In order to create an enabling environment for further implementation of the ICPD Plan of Action, the Lao government is now in the process of

considering and promulgating its first population and development policy. The policies were formulated through a consultative process, involving various government and non-governmental agencies, and mass organizations of the **central** and provincial levels, with a view to integrating these policies in all national priority programs and strategies.

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

As can be seen from the foregoing, the Lao government **reaffirms** strongly and adhere consistently to the principles of ICPD-POA and, with the substantial support of the international donor community, will do its utmost to achieve gradually the objectives and goals of the above mentioned POA. This has been confirmed by the fact that in the fourth five socio-economic development plan (1996-2000) budget allocation to the social sector has **been** significantly increased compared with the previous plan. As regards the fifth five year plan (2001-2005) which is under preparation, the Lao government will see to it that the social sector (in particular projects and programmes dealing with population issue) will be given higher priority.

My Delegation should also like to urge the international community to pay special attention to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), particularly those which have been adversely affected by the current regional and financial crisis. The Lao P.D.R., my country, is among them. Consequently, only little or symbolic financial contribution can be expected from these countries for implementing the ICPD-POA.

In conclusion, I should like to assure you, Mr. President, of the full support and cooperation of my Delegation. We will spare no effort to make this important Special Session, a success.

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Thank you very much for your attention.

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