

Check Against Delivery

**STATEMENT**  
**by**  
**H.E. Ambassador Alounkeo Kittikhoun**  
**Permanent Representative**  
**of the Lao PDR to the United Nations**  
**Head of the Lao PDR Delegation**  
**at the High-level Segment**  
**of the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations**  
**Commission on Sustainable Development**

*New York, 28 April 2004*

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the Lao PDR delegation before this important High-level Meeting. Allow me to take this opportunity to convey our delegation's warmest congratulations to you and other members of the Bureau on your respective election. We rest assured that under your guidance, our deliberations will be made a success.

Mr. Chairman,

Loyal to its policy of linking socio-economic development with environment protection, the Lao PDR Government has spared no effort in implementing its relevant international commitments, particularly the MDGs and Agenda 21. In light of these, a National Poverty Eradication Strategy (NPEP) which includes as its main elements, among others, the three cross-cutting issues discussed by the current CSD session, has been adopted. This provides a comprehensive policy platform for coordinating all the national, sub-regional, regional and international efforts to address these daunting issues, specially water and sanitation.

Mr. Chairman,

Attaching great importance to the management of water and water resources, the Lao PDR government introduced a law on water and water resources in 1996. Subsequently, in 1998 the Water Resource Coordination Centre (WRCC) was established with a mandate to coordinate the activities of the line ministries and agencies in the water sector management. In 2001, a Prime Minister's Decree was issued to implement the law. In enforcing the law, a public awareness campaign has been carried out through mass media such as a documentary film on "Water Value", drawing contests and various publications.

Water supply and environmental health activities are vital for controlling disease outbreaks, particularly epidemics of diarrhoeal diseases. Consequently, our government has put in place a number of projects to improve water supply and environmental health across the country. A nationwide hygiene campaign called "three cleans", i.e. clean water, living environment and food, has also been carried out constantly. As a result, the proportion of the population with sustainable access to an improved water source has increased from 28 per cent in 1990 to 58.1 per cent in 2002 and that with access to improved sanitation increased from 11 per cent to 41.6 per cent for the same period, thus contributing to a significant drop in maternal, infant and under five mortality rates between 1995 and 2000.

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding the foregoing progress, only about 55% of the Lao population has access to piped or protected well water and less than 40% of the households has sanitary latrines, and less than 10% of the primary schools has proper latrines. These conditions have resulted in outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases in several areas. The number of patients and deaths remains high.

To address the problems, our government plans to expand the clean water supply and environmental health programme. Its main objective is to increase for 2003-2005, the access to clean water to 65-70% of the population, improve their use of hygienic latrines to 45-50 % and equip, at least, 20% of the primary schools with sanitary latrines.

Mr. Chairman,

As least developed and landlocked developing country, the Lao PDR still finds it difficult to cope with the efforts towards meeting the internationally agreed targets. This is basically due to its financial and human resource constraints. More remains to be done to reach both the MDGs and JPOI targets. With a projected 6 per cent increase in the government's budget spending on the social sector for 2003-2006, it appears yet to be far from adequate. So, we earnestly appeal to the international community for increased partnership and support in our endeavours to pursue socio-economic development programmes aimed at achieving the goals and targets.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.



