



High Level Forum on Drafting the Action Plan of Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

International Cooperation and Training Centre (ICTC)
Vientiane, 1 February 2007

General Overview

The first High Level Forum on Drafting the Action Plan of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was held on the morning of Thursday, 1 February 2007, at the ICTC. The purpose of this Forum was to present and discuss with Partners in Development the Terms of Reference for developing the Action Plan and indicators, and to reach agreement and finalize this Terms of Reference. The forum was attended by 63 participants out of which 22 are Government and 41 donors (See List of participants in Annex 2).

The Forum commenced at 9.00 am with an Opening Address by the Chair, H.E. Phongsavath Boupoua, Vice-Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). It was followed by Opening Remarks by the Co-Chair, Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative. Thereafter, Dr. Bountheuang Mounlasy, Director General, Department of International Cooperation (DIC), MOFA, made a presentation on the Terms of Reference (TOR) for Developing a Country Action Plan and Indicators to Implement the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (see the attached Presentation in Annex 1).

In addition to the slide notes, Dr Bountheuang noted the significant work that has already been carried out in developing an Action Plan for aid effectiveness, and that we need to make use of existing work. He also noted that the Government will lead the Secretariat, but has also requested that UNDP, as co-chair of the Round Table Process, to provide lead support to the Secretariat. In addition, he noted that the Government has nominated representatives for the Secretariat and Task Force and these include DIC, MOF, CPI and MCTPC.

The presentation was followed by a discussion period where the participants were given the opportunity to comment on the issues raised. General agreement was reached with some clarifications on the process. The valuable comments and suggestions made during the meeting are summarised below in chronological order.

Comments and Suggestions made during the Meeting

European Commission: Mr. Sandro Cerrato, Chargé d'Affaires

- The EC expressed their appreciation for the clear and very well structured presentation. Overall, the EC agree with the structure and will send their nomination for the Secretariat and Taskforce by 5 February 2007.
- The EC made three comments:
 1. That the role of the Secretariat and Task Force seems primarily focused on drafting the Action Plan by the due date of 31 May. What will happen after

- afterwards? Will these groups dissolve? How will the Action Plan be monitored?
2. What will be the role of the Sector Working Groups in drafting, implementing and monitoring the Action Plan?
 3. Has the professional facilitator been identified?

Embassy of Japan: H.E. Mr. Makoto Katsura, Ambassador

- Japan thanked the organizers for the excellent presentation.
- Japan stated that the process should not only be inclusive, flexible and predictable, but also transparent. In Paragraph 13 of the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness “transparent decision making” is highlighted. Policies for transparency should be stressed, particularly regarding development assistance.
- Japan’s Country Assistance Programme for the Lao PDR took almost two years to develop. A copy of this will be given to the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, the UN Resident Coordinator and Dr. Bountheuang Mounlasy, Director General, DIC. Others who wish to have a copy should email the Embassy.

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs thanked the EC and Japan for their comments.

World Bank: Mrs. Ekaterina Vostroknotova, Acting Country Manager

- The TOR lays out an efficient process.
- The Secretariat should be small with suitable capacity as it will need to make substantial contributions in drafting the Action Plan – its role is more than just logistics. able to contribute the necessary resources and should have experience of the process in countries other than the Lao PDR.
- The World Bank commended the Government for noting that the existing Draft Action Plan should be used as the basis for discussion.
- The OECD-DAC survey should not be relied on too much. Even if the survey is not submitted the development of the Action Plan should go ahead.

Embassy of Sweden: Mr. Jorgen Persson, Counsellor

- Sweden will support the Taskforce and the High Level Forum.
- Sweden agrees with what Dr. Bountheuang Mounlasy said about not reinventing the wheel. A lot of work has been done and the team should use what already exists.
- The Secretariat should be small but representative.
- Sweden endorses the comment made by the EC regarding the implementation and monitoring aspects of the CAP. Sweden reiterated that the drafting of the CAP is just the beginning.

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his gratitude for the comments made and is looking forward to their participation.

INGO: Mr. Luc Delneuve, Country Director, HI-Belgium

- Thanked the Government for inviting the INGO representatives to participate in the meeting and asked if the Government envisaged the participation of INGOs, and if so, would it be on the Taskforce or on the Secretariat?

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the Government truly appreciates the role played by INGOs in the socioeconomic development of the Lao PDR and looks forward to their participation in the Task Force and High Level Forum..

Embassy of Germany: H.E. Dr. Peter Wienand, Ambassador

- Germany and their EU colleagues will approve the process.
- The EU countries, including Germany, will be represented by the EC on the Secretariat.
- Germany has already given the names of their representatives.
- One of the challenges is making the Action Plan simple and realistic.
- Transparency is important, and this should occur through having an inclusive process.

The Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs thanked Germany for approving the process for drafting the Action Plan and acknowledged the comment, similar to that of Japan, about the importance of transparency.

Embassy of France: H.E. Mr. Maurice Portiche, Ambassador

- France is pleased to approve the process for developing the Action Plan.
- France wishes to be part of the Taskforce.

Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, thanked the participants for their support and replied to some of the comments made:

- In relation to monitoring and follow up arrangements for the CAP and the role of the Sector Working Groups, the UN Resident Coordinator commented that these aspects will need to be carefully considered and agreed to *during* the drafting of the CAP. Ms. Sonam also commended the Government's decision to undertake a review of the Sector Working Groups.
- We are currently in the process of finding a professional facilitator. Whether someone is recruited from outside the Lao PDR or within and who this person will be, still has to be decided. Ms. Sonam encouraged all Partners in Development to submit their nominations for suitable candidates to DIC.
- The UN Resident Coordinator agreed that transparency should be added as one of the key principles of the process and outcome.
- The UN Resident Coordinator concurred with the comments made by the World Bank that the Secretariat will need to provide substantive inputs into preparing drafts for the Task Force. Members of the Secretariat will need to allocate sufficient staff time, and members need to be suitably qualified and experienced. The Government has nominated six Government representatives in the Secretariat and these are at Director General level. The Secretariat has to be small as well as representative. For example, the EC will represent the EU and UNDP will represent the UN system.

H.E. Phongsavath Boupma, Vice-Minister, MOFA, highlighted that the Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness can still be signed.

Dr. Bountheuang Mounlasy, Director General, DIC, MOFA, also replied to some of the questions raised, stating that the Sector Working Groups (SWG) will be used in the implementation of the Action Plan. Eight SWGs have already been set up. Existing Government systems and structures will be used to implement the Action Plan. The Taskforce will be a temporary mechanism, to draft the Action Plan. After the 31 May 2007, the Taskforce will be disbanded. The current Secretariat will be disappeared when Action Plan is approved and new Secretariat will be established to support the implementation of the Action Plan and disseminate information. In addition, the Government expects to receive around USD 4 million a year in assistance as announced by development partners in the RTM9. Thus there is a need to work together to absorb the assistance effectively.

H.E. Phongsavath Boupcha, Vice-Minister, MOFA, asked those who had not done so already to nominate a person for the Taskforce. He stressed that this will be a flexible process. It is necessary that the Government and the Partners in Development work together through the SWGs to implement the Action Plan. Excellency Boupcha called one last time for comments and suggestions from the floor and then concluded that general agreement has been reached on the process for going forward. On behalf of the Government of the Lao PDR, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs closed the Forum by thanking participants for attending the first High Level Forum.