



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC TO UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by
H.E. Madame Onechanh Thammavong
Vice President of the
Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women
President of the Lao Women's Union
at the Forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

New York, 7 March 2005

Madame Chairperson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to represent the Government of the Lao PDR at the Forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I strongly believe that through this august meeting the Lao PDR delegation will learn from far-reaching experiences of women's movements worldwide.

Madame Chairperson,

Through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcomes of the Twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, significant success has been achieved in the advancement of women. Yet, much remains to be done in the years ahead. In the case of the Lao PDR, I would like to highlight our achievements, difficulties and challenges and future plan of action for the advancement of Lao multi-ethnic women.

Madame Chairperson,

After a decade of implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, Lao PDR has recorded major achievements as follows:

I. The Lao National Assembly has adopted an amended Constitution, which contains a clause stipulating clearly the responsibility of all public sectors, society and the family for the advancement of women. This law has been enacted with a view to guaranteeing and uplifting women's status and role. It also defines basic provisions, measures to protect the legitimate rights and interests of women, the responsibility of the State, Society and family vis a vis women, aiming to promote women's knowledge and

competency, gender equality, eliminate of all forms of discrimination against women, prevent and fight against trafficking in women and children, combat violence against women and children in the family and society, thus creating enabling conditions for women's participation and empowerment in national defence and development.

2. The Lao Government established the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women (Lao NCAW), whose important mandate is to assist government in formulating policy and strategy to promote the advancement of women.

3. Established as the first of its kind the project on Gender Resource Information and Development Center (GRID) of the Lao Women's Union is mandated to promote gender mainstreaming in the Lao PDR.

Moreover, a Women Parliament Caucus and Lao Association of the Parliamentarians on Population and Development were established, with the mandate to empower female parliamentarians.

4. In conformity with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Lao PDR Government continues to implement the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES), in the pursuit of two main objectives: a) sustained economic growth and development b) eradication of poverty. In this regard, the Lao Women's Union and Lao NCAW have a role to play in mobilizing full participation of women and gender mainstreaming in the planning and implementation of the Strategy.

5. To address the issue of illiteracy and the existing gender disparities in the education sector, the Government has developed policy and strategy through its Plan of Action for Basic Education for All.

6. The Government has been implementing a birth spacing programme, a safe motherhood project that cover 25 % of women and men nationwide. The Lao Women's Union has also organized a series of training workshops on gender and reproductive health, health and sanitation and infiltration of primary healthcare for the grassroots women.

7. The New Government's Decree on the promotion and development of small and medium enterprises has given special importance and attention to female entrepreneurs.

8. In 1997, the Government launched the implementation of a Land Titling Project. The Lao Women's Union is a key partner for mainstreaming gender concerns into this project with a view to ensuring women's legitimate ownership rights to the land they own.

Madame Chairperson,

Along with the foregoing achievements, in our efforts to advance the status of Lao multi-ethnic women we are still facing problems and challenges as follows:

- The Lao PDR is a landlocked and least developed country with 80% of the Population living in rural and remote areas. The Lao population is composed of 49 ethnic groups with different languages and life styles. Such a situation has prevented the people as well as women and children from having adequate access to education and healthcare services.
- Traditional beliefs and ancient stereotypes especially in rural areas in which men are regarded as superior to women which have long existed in Lao society, are still obstacles for women to develop themselves.
- Another challenge is that there is improper gender perspective in society.

Madame Chairperson,

To solve the said problems and challenges, Lao PDR will carry out the following activities:

1. Continue to implement the Beijing Platform of Action as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) consistent with the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2005-2010) and the periodical Socioeconomic Development Plan of the government.
2. Disseminate the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women to raise common awareness and responsibility in society.
3. Improve the organizational structure of the Lao NCAW in all ministries, equivalent organizations and local administration at all levels.
4. Mainstreaming gender concerns into all government institutions, mass organizations and the Lao multi-ethnic people and women.

Madam Chairperson,

The Lao PDR reaffirms its strong commitment to achieving the set goals with a view to advancing the status of women. In this endeavour, we very much hope that the international community will continue to provide support and assistance to us.

Thank you very much for your attention!