



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
Peace Independence Democracy Unity Prosperity

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Statement by H.E. Mme Khempheng PHOLSENA
Minister to the Government's Office
Chairperson of the Lao National Commission for
the Advancement of Women
At the Fifty-Seventh Session of the Commission on
the Status of Women

New York, 06 March 2013

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Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and privilege for me to represent the Government of the Lao PDR at the 57th session of the CSW which is dedicated this year to the Elimination and Prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls – a theme high on the agenda of the Government in our quest for poverty eradication and sustainable growth. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women is an obvious requirement to face the vital challenges of our time in general and in particular, to enable my country, the Lao PDR, to pursue its objective of exiting by 2020 the Group of LDCs. Indeed, how could it be conceivable to achieve a sustainable and all-inclusive economic and social development for all, equal rights and opportunities for everybody, both men and women, without addressing the root causes of gender inequalities and disparities leading to violence against women and girls in order to mobilize the full engagement in development of the second half of our population which are our women.

Madam Chair,

Our priorities towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment include: i) an appropriate legal framework; ii) an operational institutional framework; iii) a consistent policy and strategy context covering all sectors, and: finally, iv) an improved

general governance or what we also call 'advocacy' meaning: participation, representation, information, communication aimed at changing the mindset in the society regarding gender stereotypes and bias to ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Indeed, the legal framework by and large exists and criminalizes violence. What is still lacking, obviously, is the capacity of related institutions to implement and enforce existing laws and decrees.

Our institutional framework, with its three vectors: the National Commission for the Advancement of Women (NCAW), the Lao Women's Union (LWU), and the Women Parliamentarian Caucus, is very functional and well coordinated with all actors in the fight against violence and for women's rights.

We have also a coherent policy and strategy context. Our National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES - 2004), the Seventh Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2011-2015) and finally the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (2011-2015) which prioritize gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women including violence with concrete indicators.

In the implementation of the above mentioned strategic setting regarding violence utmost importance is given to three pillars:

- (1) Prevention focusing on the legal framework and awareness building. A very significant step in this direction is the recent Prime Minister's Decree that establishes additional criteria to ensure gender equality and the elimination of violence at the district, village and family levels.

- (2) Prosecution of perpetrators and offenders with focus on capacity development for police officers and the judicial country wide and the strengthening of the justice system.
- (3) Support to victims- with a hotline and counseling centers for victims of violence and human trafficking.

Madam Chair,

Women's participation at the political level for us is an overarching priority. Much progress has been achieved in recent years with one quarter approximately of our National Assembly members composed of women. And the increasing involvement of women in government and local administration at all levels.

At the same time the rapidly increasing number of women in our country with registered business is cause for much hope to further foster economic empowerment and political representation by our women thanks to improved human development endowments such as health and education.

Madam Chair,

The Lao PDR's economic and social achievements of high economic growth and impressive reduction of poverty cannot hide the urgent need for us to further reduce women's vulnerability which has drastically increased with some of the new emerging issues that we face, namely the impacts of regional integration with its own new challenges and risks, such as: illegal migration leading to human trafficking and violence against women and children both boys and girls, sexual abuses, new ills, including drugs and STD (sexually transmitted diseases).

In addition, climate change, including natural disasters, also places new pressures on women's and children's vulnerabilities that we have to address urgently.

Madam Chair,

To address these new challenges, we need a strong governance setting that emphasizes the advancement of women and gender equality by improving access to justice for women, to resources, funds, technology, markets and public services in order to optimize the economic empowerment of our women which is indeed quintessential to reduce women's vulnerability and to put an end to violence against women and children.

In this respect, our political system has several advantages and positive elements to ensure a successful achievement of the above mentioned objectives. On the one hand, our leadership in the Party and the State is totally committed to these priorities as witnessed by related policies and strategies. The strong partnership with the Lao Front for National reconstruction and country mass organizations: Lao Women's Union, Lao Youth Union, Lao Trade Union coupled with wide participation of the society at large, including the private sector, is greatly contributing to the building up of the right mindset and actions to prevent and eliminate all form of discrimination and violence against women and children.

Madam Chair,

In closing, let me reaffirm the support of our delegation to the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of ASEAN, the statement by the G77 and China delivered by the Republic of Fiji and to the Francophone Plan of Action on violence against women and girls.

The Lao PDR reiterates its strong commitment to a future free of violence against women and girls in working closely with the regional and world community.

Thank you very much