OPENING ADDRESS BY H.E MR. PHONESAVATH BOUPHA, AT THE WORKSHOP ON REPORTING REQUIRED BY THE TWO COVENANTS, HELD IN VIENTIANE FROM 26 - 27 APRIL 2004

Excellency Ambassador.

Distinguished Guests.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honor, on behalf of both the Government of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) and the National Steering Committee for the Preparation for Ratification and Implementation of the Two International Human Rights Covenants, to address you at this workshop. May I express my appreciation to the participants who have devoted their valuable time for this important workshop. This is an indication of their commitment to the reporting under international conventions, an obligation that Lao PDR has to fulfil in the present and in the future.

Distinguished Guests

Lao PDR signed the two Covenants in 2000 and is now in the process of preparation for their ratification and implementation. One of the activities that needs to be done in this regard is the training of concerned officials in writing reports on the implementation of the two Covenants that are to be submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Human Rights Committee by States Parties.

The Lao PDR has been a party to several human rights conventions that require the States Parties to submit their reports on their implementation to the concerned United Nations body. These include the convention on the of the Child, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women. So far, the Lao PDR has encountered difficulties in meeting its reporting obligations.

Since its last report submitted under the International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Lao PDR has been unable to submit its periodical report for twenty years. It has just completed a single report common for all periodical reports from the sixth in 1985 to the fifteenth report due in 2003).

The same difficulties also exist in meeting the obligation of submitting reports required by other conventions.

In view of such hindrances, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been seeking assistance to support the training of officials of different agencies concerned in this regard. The organization of this workshop dealing specifically with writing reports on the implementation of the two Covenants is particularly important for the Lao PDR for all our participants are from those human rights coordinating teams which have been newly established or will be set up for the purpose of assisting the National Steering Committee in the implementation of its functions, including the submission of reports.
This workshop would provide initial knowledge for the participants paving the way to further education in the human rights field. According to the National Steering Committee's work plan training of technical staff, especially the staff of the human rights coordinating teams within the agencies whose leading members are the members of the Steering Committee, would continue in order to broaden their knowledge and sharpen their skills with the view to successfully achieving the implementation of Committee's work plan.

Since International human rights law has not been included in the teaching programme of the Lao PDR, the training referred to above needs international assistance similar to the support received from the Australian Government for the organization of this workshop.

In the name of the National Steering Committee, I expect that you, the participants of this workshop would spare no efforts to gain knowledge and skills offered by the resource persons and apply them in your practical work improving the implementation of the Lao PDR's obligations in terms of submitting, reports.

On behalf of our Government may I express my appreciation and sincere thanks to the Government of Australia, the Australian Embassy, the Centre for Democratic Institutions of the Australian National University as well as the experts who have extended to us valuable assistance in organizing this workshop, without which this training would not be possible.

Finally, may I wish His Excellency Ambassador Jonathan Thwaites the other distinguished guests and the participants good health and successes in your noble efforts.

May I declare the workshop open.

Thank you